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THE VALENTINES FOR NUMBER TWENTY.



CUPID PREPARING FOR ST. VALENTINE'S DAY.

menhently obliged to them. My adventures have no moral, nor was I even dismissed with what the Yankees call 'a caution.'

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WHEN Shakespeare called life 'a tale told by an idiot,' he may not have intended to be personal, and mean that my life was the tale, and I the idiot who told it; nevertheless, I fear he was right. Three hundred years ago he could scarcely have foreseen that I, Gilbert Bennett, a young man, undoubtedly from the country, should come up to London, and there in a certain month make a most outrageous fool of myself. And if, on perusal of this little episode in my history, any of the readers of 'London Society' should think fit to differ with me and Shakespeare (best man foremost), I am sure I shall feel im-

It is customary to begin an autobiography either with a brace of ancestors, or of horsemen riding down a hill; but these degenerate modes of interesting the reader I utterly abhor; it is a part in books I always skip; but if any one wishes for a further and more minute description of me than is given here, my *carte de visite* can be had at Mayall's; or if it be a lady, and young, who desires it, I have no objection to make an exchange—and believe me, I look well in an album.

Would any one like a list of my luggage? One black box, one leather portmanteau, one hat-box, one carpet-bag.

With these I reached my lodgings in a certain street, in a certain part of London. I refrain from giving the particular address, such as the street, and the number of the house; for after silly people rushing to look for Mrs. Lirriper's; there is no knowing what may happen. All Europe convulsed to its centre might be hurrying to London to see the famous spot; and as giving the true address would settle neither America nor Schleswig Holstein, I modestly refrain from saying more on the subject.

For the ease of mind of any tender-hearted females who may be uneasy about me when I come to speak of illness, I may mention, that before I was allowed to leave home, my good mother had seen to it that I had had the measles, the whooping-cough, been vaccinated, and, finally, had a try at the mumps, so that I was well qualified to begin life on my own account. Having also been confirmed, I pass by my godmother and godfathers in silence, not unmingled with disgust; for if interrogated as the Church Catechism enjoins,—‘What did your godfathers and godmothers then for you?’ I must make answer—‘Nothing but give me two church services, and a fork and spoon.’ And though it is a good thing to be born with a silver spoon in one's mouth, who wants to come to be baptized with two church services?

They were charming sponsors.

I had not got my town head when

I reached London; and heaven help the poor country lad's brains when he comes into the din for the first time after making a long train journey! How over all the noise I seemed to hear the screaming of fifty locomotives, the ringing of a thousand bells, the rattle of a million carriages, and a dull roar like a thousand muffled drums beating at a hundred funerals—all at once. And how I crept away after I deposited my luggage at the address given me, and wandered for an hour in gloomy back streets far away from the bewildering roar—streets that seemed to lead to no place, and never have any one coming in or going out of them. I mention this to show I really was young and very, very green at that date of my life.

I came up from Hempton-in-the-Marshes to enter on what my stepfather called ‘the brilliant path of commerce,’ which, definitely speaking, was to occupy a clerk's stool in the counting-house of Hemp and Hall; great names cityward, as everyone knows. ‘A great opening,’ this path of commerce was called by many people; but I cannot say I ever agreed with them. I took possession of the lodgings Smithers, the head clerk, had taken for me, and of my stool in the office next morning, and thus began my London life. At first I liked the novelty of having rooms of my own; it was dignified to be able to ring the bell and find as much fault with the pudding as one chose, without being sternly commanded to eat and be thankful. Also the preserves and other good things, which my dear mother had packed in the black box I mentioned, were my own, and I confess I spared no exertions to empty the box as fast as possible. No stepfather to cry ‘hold!’ no stepfather's mother to prophesy I was certainly not born to be drowned!

Censorious people may blame the preserves; but I know it was the close confinement and sedentary life, after the country freedom of my previous life, which made me ill. And ill I was, with a vengeance! Ill in the beginning of December,

and ill for many, many a day. Smithers sent me a doctor, and occasionally dropped in of an evening; but with this exception, I spent day after day alone.

How dull it was! Mariana in the moated grange was gay compared to me! My only amusement was a circulating library—and even that was bad, for as I never knew what books to send for, I left the selection to the boy who gave them out; and I must say, I soon learned to think of that cub as one of my natural enemies, so bad and stupid were the volumes he sent me. I tried various plans, such as taking the catalogue alphabetically; one day the first book in A, second day the first one in B, next day in C, and so on; but even that plan, as well as many others of a like kind I tried, failed. Consequently, to while away the tedious hours of the day, I was driven to staring out of the window—for I was not always confined to bed, but principally on a sofa in my sitting-room, which, I ought here to mention, was on the second floor of the house.

The view was certainly limited, but such as it was, I made the most of it; and, as will be seen, I found for myself sermons in stones, and good in everything.

Few houses in a street cover much area; the time had gone by for the street in which I lived to spare ground for houses with rooms on both sides of the hall door; once country villas may have stood on the site, or cottages with sweet-briar hedges, and beds of marigolds; but that was long ago, when Pepys wrote his diary, and the second Charles uttered wise saws and did foolish deeds.

Now it was a long, dull, narrow street, where the tall houses made heaven, as the child said, 'a long way off,' and one could look almost into their opposite neighbours' faces. In such a street a view is commanded in general of three houses—a good view—while a side glance of some half-dozen others can be obtained by the genteel practice of flattening your nose and one whisker against the window pane.

Of the three houses directly oppo-

site me, kind Providence centred my interest on the middle one. For an infirm old lady, who never went out, occupied the one to the right, and a tiresome old bachelor, who was always out, the one to the left; so what could I do all day but stare at the middle one?

I soon found out how many occupants this house had, and that was a step gained. I knew the hours of their going out, and the hours of their coming in; and if I did not guess accurately what they had for dinner, at least I knew the hour at which they ate it. I asked the servant what the name of the family was, and she stared at me as if I were 'a hinfant phenomoner,' with a plurality of heads. The acute reader will here call to mind the remark I made at a very early stage, that I was undoubtedly 'from the country.' Blessed be country towns, if one cares to know all about their opposite neighbours, and every one else's opposite neighbours: such knowledge is chronic; but, alas! London yields no such ceaseless mine of conversation. The servant asked 'missus,' but missus looked at me as if I were slightly delirious, and answered me soothingly as an invalid, who ought not to be crossed, and went down stairs. Then I sent the willing slavey across the street, and she returned with the exciting news that No. 20 was on the hall door. But this helped me little; for on procuring last year's 'Directory,' I found No. 20 marked 'vacant;' so my interesting inquiries were suddenly checked.

Then I thought of giving them a fancy name, and searched through a great many novels for a suitable one, but found none that fully satisfied me. All the names seemed indissolubly connected with certain characters, not at all resembling my ideal of the folks in No. 20.

There were four people living in this house, besides the servants—father, mother, and two girls I concluded to be the daughters. Their drawing-room was a double room, just on a level with mine, but not so exactly opposite, that I could not see the fireplace, near which, it

being December, the ladies were generally grouped. When the folding-doors stood open I had an excellent view, owing to the thorough light, and could see various pieces of furniture plainly. A piano, a couch, a workframe, and flowers in the far-off drawing-room. I could see into the parlour, too; yea, even to the corner of 'The Times,' which Paterfamilias read every morning, and I could see the young lady who poured out tea and coffee.

It was all very well to allow the family to go without a surname, but I soon found it absolutely necessary to give the young ladies Christian names. Easy as the task may appear, I had some difficulty in selecting suitable ones. To find two names for individuals of the opposite sexes might be easy enough; Abelard and Heloise, Romeo and Juliet, and many others; or of our own sex, Damon and Pythias, for instance; but the two young ladies fairly puzzled me. To give them common fancy names went against my grain, as the saying is; I must have something with character connected with it, some names, in fact, that carried a story with them. It may be that the loves of young ladies for each other are few in number, or not lasting, for there are not many on record. Even the friendship of the two whose names I finally selected, are placed on record only on the occasion of a serious misunderstanding. I thought of Rachel and Leah; but their mutual jealousies, and the deception practised on poor Jacob at the end of his first seven years, made me reject these names, and look out for something more suitable. Martha and Mary were rejected on the ground that neither young lady seemed to take exclusively to the rôle of Martha, both seeming to spend an equal amount of time over their plants, their piano, their books, and their embroidery. I thought also of Minna and Brenda, but my two gentle creatures seemed to have nothing in common with Magnus Troil's hardy children. At last, in a moment of inspiration—I could scarcely call it anything else—I

bethought me of the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' and its two heroines, and I at once decided my two friends should be Helena and Hermia. That was a grand idea. The taller, and I concluded the elder, should be Helena, and the pretty little creature should be Hermia. I had always looked on Hermia as a small woman.

I found it much more comfortable for myself when their names were allotted. Thus, when they came down to the drawing-room before dinner, and, as they often did, sat on low seats and read by the fire-light, it was so much pleasanter to say, 'Helena has on her blue dress,' or, 'Oh, dear me! Hermia has finished her third volume already,' instead of 'the tall one,' or 'the short one.' Every day they went out to walk unless it were very wet; and I used to be in a fever of impatience until they came in again; and if rain came on while they were out, I was quite miserable until they came home, for fear of their being wet.

Thus days passed on until a few were only left before Christmas. I was not able to go home, and no one there seemed to care particularly whether I did or not. My mother wrote to me that my stepfather supposed I should soon be able to return to business, and going down to Hempton would only unsettle me, and that decided the thing. I remained in doors on my sofa, as I had been doing for two or three weeks.

My opposite neighbours were very busy all the week before Christmas. At first I wondered what the girls were about when for two mornings they never made their appearance in the drawing-room; and it was with a feeling of great joy I saw the gleam of their light dresses before dinner, and the books and seats by the fire as usual, until the father's knock and entrance brought dinner and a descent to the dining-room. It was very stupid of me not to remember that Christmas housekeeping had to be attended to, for I made myself most unutterably miserable with the fear that Helena and Hermia might be going away to spend Christmas, and that the



mornings might be taken up packing in their own rooms.

At last I saw Hermia one morning in the drawing-room. She came in with a white apron on, and going to the secretaire, took out some sheets of letter paper which she proceeded to cut into various fancy patterns.

'It is for ornament,' I cried, joyfully; 'then they are going to spend this week at home, for what would be the use of making ornamental pastry if they were going away?'

Miss Hermia spoiled two or three sheets of paper before she succeeded to her mind; but I admired the judicious way in which she burned her failures, and only went down stairs with her successes in her hand. At that very moment I had paper in my desk which would, I am sure, have been the very thing for her; and a hundred times at least during that day I wished I might have dared to offer it to her. Fancy the exquisite felicity of seeing her cut my paper! Even if it were to be chopped as small as mince-meat and cast into a burning fiery furnace afterwards, what matter? Gladly would I have followed the fragments, could I but have been satisfied that Hermia and her sister would have dropped a few tears just to extinguish the remains of my smouldering ashes; nay, one tear each, which would make only a pair between them, would have perfectly satisfied me. As it was, I could only pull over my desk and look at the paper, and handle it, and finally doze off in the midst of a brilliant *château en espagne*, in which everything I had in the world (no great possessions, certainly) was being used by the young ladies in No. 20, without any compunction or hesitation.

As I had nothing to look at in the evenings, the shutters across the way being then closed, I generally went very early to bed, and found the benefit of this arrangement in more ways than one. Indeed I, at that time of my life, slept such an amount of what old-fashioned folk are apt to term 'beauty sleep,' being the sleep had before twelve o'clock P.M.—that the wonder is I did not become a

perfect Adonis. I did not, however, and set down that theory from thenceforth in my list of 'popular delusions.'

But the principal advantage I derived from getting through a good deal of sleep early in the evening was, that I felt no desire to enjoy more in the morning, and was generally up and at my post of observation early, at least as soon as the family opposite were down for breakfast. So it fell out that on the morning of Christmas Eve I was at my window early. The servant had just retired after depositing my coffee-pot and toast upon the table, when a cab drove up to No. 20, and a visitor with some luggage arrived. Never shall I forget my feelings as I looked at that man. With a gasp I recognized him as my rival. In what? will naturally be asked, and as natural will be the answer, 'I am sure I do not know.' But sufficient it was that he was gaining access to that enchanted floor, and about to have social intercourse with those fair women who were but a dream to me. Shall I describe him? Even now—and some years have passed since then—his figure rises before me as he was that Christmas Eve, when I saw him for the first time, and hated him too.

He was tall (I am no great height myself), and slight, and dark—dark, yes, to the very moustache, which was, like himself, thin. Then his dress, which I at once pronounced 'snobby,' was in keeping with his figure and style; and if he wore one thing worse than another it was leather gaiters. I hate leather gaiters! I have no patience with leather gaiters! I had rather an indifference to them before, now I hated them cordially. Hating the stranger as a whole, I think I cannot better describe him than by saying he was exactly the picture of the villain one sees on the stage. Of course he had a bass voice. I was sure I had heard such a voice a hundred times in melodramas. The real villain, the ruffian of deepest dye, never threatens his victim in a tenor voice—never, for the simple reason, 'it would not take.' Imagine

being requested to deliver your watch in counter-tenor! Just as it is the proper thing for peasants who come out in picturesque costume to walk, crossing their legs, as they did in 'Leah' the other night when I went to see Miss Bateman. I felt certain, from the moment I knew peasants were inevitable, that they would come out crossing their legs as they walked, and that they did, I leave to the unbiassed judgment of all who went in '64 to see the transatlantic charmer.

It took away all my appetite for breakfast—and mine was pretty cool when I turned to it—to see how they received that man. Every one came out to welcome him, father, mother, and daughters. The father clapping him on the back and wringing his hand, the mother kissing him, and the two maid-servants quarrelling him on the honour of carrying his portmanteau. And, what was worse than all, I am afraid I saw him kiss the girls just as the hall door was being shut. What I could see of the breakfast tactics only made me worse. Helena made tea, and Hermia danced attendance on him. Through one window I could see her stoop over the fender, bringing away successive hot plates, while through the other I could see their destination was to be heaped up with choice viands for the diabolical stranger.

Was it to be wondered at that my appetite was destroyed by contemplating this scene? How could a fellow crack his egg with proper discretion under such circumstances? I did not crack mine, for I reduced both it and the egg-cup to small fragments at one blow; for inasmuch as on this villain's arrival I had hated him from the crown of his horrid wide-awake to the buttons of his detestable leather gaiters, I now hated him cordially to the heels (military) of his boots.

Then he must go out to walk, with them! nothing less would do, and bring them home in a cab (which was heaped up with holly) just before it grew dark. I saw a sheet spread on the drawing-room floor, and the dark shiny branches piled upon it, and then the girls, with

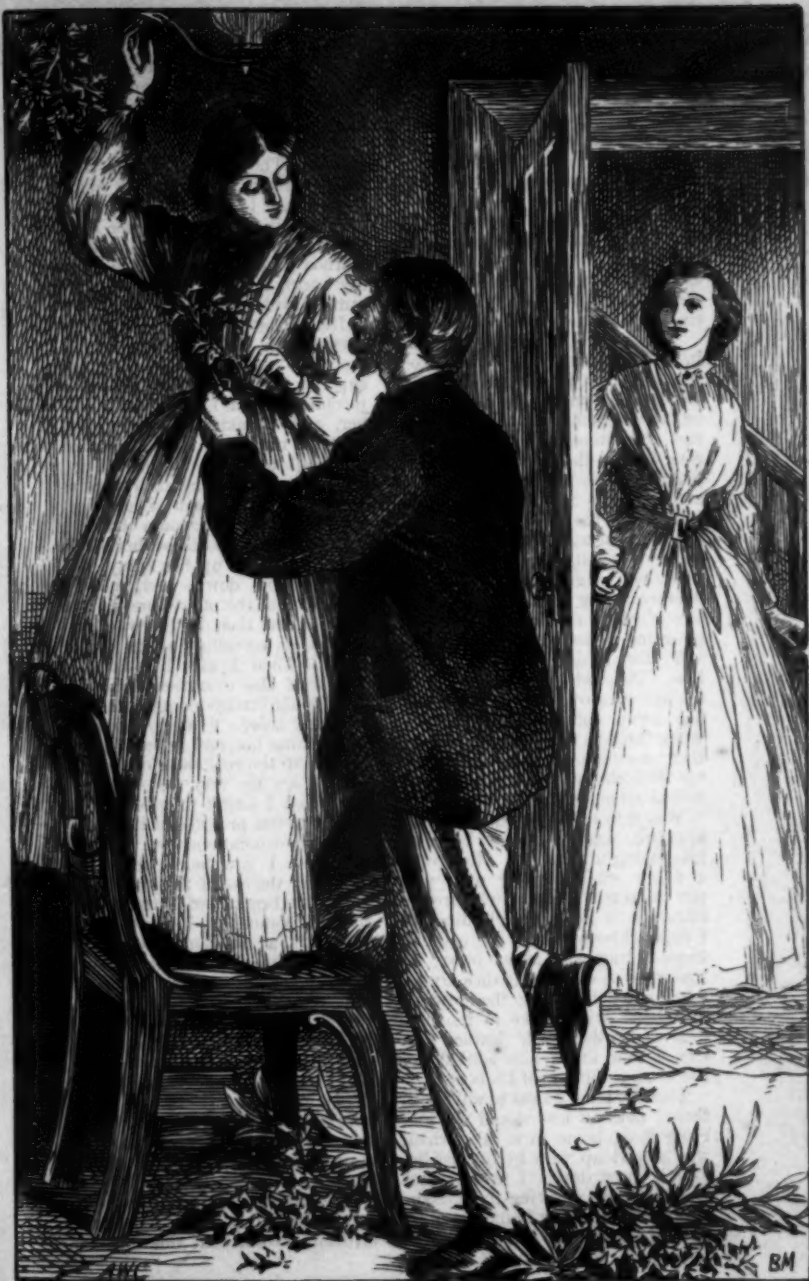
the villain's aid, began to decorate the lamps and picture-frames.

What a blessing I was awake when this little play began, and what a happy hour they chose for it! The girls had on their white dresses, and floated about from mirror to picture, from picture to lamp, like the *Peris* in the illustrated *Lalla Rookh*. Then it was I learned a secret which toned down my burning hatred, and left only a strong dislike in its place.

Helena stood on a chair and dressed the lamp; probably she took this duty on account of her superior height; perhaps the villain recommended it, for he stood beside her, and, breaking the holly and pelletrie into small pieces, handed them up to her. Hermia flitted about the room doing such work as came within the reach of her short arms when standing on a chair. I could see the gleam of her dress as, after putting up her sprays, she would jump down, and, moving back, look at the effect from a little distance, and then dart forward and push some refractory stems out of sight. Then I saw her take an armful of the evergreens and descend to the dining-room to continue her work there. I was so engaged in watching her, and the strong fire lighted up the room so gloriously—I could see the very flowers in her hair—that I forgot to give any attention to the progress of the drawing-room decorations, but when I did look I saw more than was meant for the eye of the public.

Honour bright! with the golden rule in my memory, I am not going to betray a confidence so unwittingly given. If the villain never committed a crime of greater magnitude than to stand steady Miss Helena by encircling her waist with his arms, all forgiveness to his memory! It is not for me to cast the first stone. I have done worse things myself in my day. Nor was it exactly extortion, the villain exacting toll for lifting the young lady down from her high position and replacing her in it.

Once Hermia caught them in the act of balancing their debtor and creditor account in this fashion.



Drawn by Alfred W. Cooper.]

THE VALENTINES FOR No. XX.

[See the Story.]



She may have laughed, but I could not hear it, only I saw the gesture of amazement, the uplifted hands, and could fancy some lively sally at the lovers' expense, when she ran from the room closely followed by the indignant villain, who seemed to demand instant vengeance. That she had made good her escape I doubted not, for the next moment I saw her opening the hall door to her father, when his familiar knock wakened up the quiet street. Then with what interest I watched them all assemble for dinner round the drawing-room fire. Helena and her villain stood far apart at different sides of the group, but I could follow Hermia's face as it turned from one culprit to the other, as if threatening them, and more than once Helena shook her head and finger at her when it could be done without observation. Of course the rest of the evening could only be imagined, as the curtains were drawn, but I pictured it to myself, and out of it I took a desperate resolve.

I would go to church next day. Not to any church at all, but to the one to which my dear friends went, and the idea possessed me so entirely I could scarcely sleep. The doctor only came every other day, and he had been with me on Christmas Eve, so there was no fear of his finding me out, unless I told him; and the next morning I was up and dressed betimes. I sent for a cab, and had it at the door ready to start when the ladies opposite came out; and then getting in, I desired the driver to keep them in sight, and take me to the church to which he would see them go.

I followed them closely in, and was so fortunate as to get a seat quite near enough to watch them all. Never did alchemist watch a crucible with more feverish eagerness than I watched them all through the service, and still with such discretion as to prevent them observing it. I wanted to see if their faces were like what I had pictured in my imagination; but I am bound in all honesty to say they were far more attractive, Hermia's especially. The father was some

seats off, as there was not room for him in the pew with the others; but for weeks after I could not help wondering if Hermia saw what I saw, viz., that during the sermon there were three hands in Helena's muff which had decidedly been only made for two. I paid dearly for going to church that day, and I was so much worse the next that the doctor found out what I had done, and very nearly gave me up. I was confined to bed for several weeks, and though once or twice, with the help of the furniture, I crawled to the window, I could see nothing of my friends in No. 20.

The second week in February, I was back on my sofa again; but whether I was stupid, or whether the habits of the family had undergone a change in the mean time, I saw little of them; and was sure to be asleep, or away from the window, whenever they went in or out, so I seldom saw them.

It was the twelfth of February, and I had finished the reading of the paper, even to the last of the advertisements, and found myself pondering over it in a most unaccountable way. It treated of valentines, and described, in glowing terms, how cheap, and brilliant, and loving, and original they could be had at a certain shop not a hundred miles distant from where I then sat.

'Cheap!' I said, indignantly; 'the man who would buy a nasty, gaudy, filigree Cupid to send to a girl deserves to be sent to Coventry. If I were a girl I would despise a fellow who could not speak for himself, I would,' I said, vehemently, bringing down my clenched fist with a bang on the table at my elbow. 'It is penny-a-line love, and he might keep it for me. Give me a real, original set of verses, to the point, and written solely for myself, that would touch my feelings!' Then I pictured some silly fellow sending a bought valentine to Hermia, and my indignation at the picture I had myself conjured up all but took away my breath. To Hermia! I writhed at the thought. Just such a thing as the villain would do! I said, and my old hatred to him woke up fiercely at the bare suppo-

sition. As I thus tortured myself with possibilities, scarcely even probabilities, of others worshipping at the same shrine I did, an idea suddenly burst upon me. I sprang up from the couch. 'By Jove, I shall send her one myself! I shall send them each one, and no one can accuse me of undue partiality!' (the acute reader will have detected long before this the state of my young affections). 'But,' I said, 'I shall make sure of Hermia's first; I might fall asleep, or have a fit, or something that would prevent me writing a second; and that my lack of confidence in my own muse was justified by its rapid exhaustion, the reader will soon see. To choose a metre, to choose a subject, to fit my rhymes—why need I dwell on these threadbare anxieties of the youthful aspirant to poetic fame? At last, having been guided in the first, by my choice of the second, an Irish legend I had read years before, I indited the following verses to Hermia, and I hope I shall receive a pardon on the score of my youth when I freely confess that I thought them very fine indeed, and far, very far beyond the average.

'My little neighbour, lend a pretty ear,  
And I will tell a little tale romantic;  
In far-off seas I found it long ago,  
Amid the surges of the wild Atlantic.  
'Two islets lie there gleaming side by side,  
But covered by a channel full of danger;  
So fair and white that the tongue of far-off times  
Called them "The Joyless Maidens of the  
Stranger."  
'For there beneath the waters calm and fair  
That gird the sisters round with azure zones,  
Lie rotting ribs of many a goodly ship,  
And many a sturdy seaman's whitening bones.  
'And now a beacon stands on either rock  
To guide the wanderer on the treacherous seas;  
In each, when first I knew them long ago,  
A solitary keeper used to be.  
'Yet not alone; for each one had a child,  
A boy that burrowed like a rabbit in the sand,  
A girl that trimmed the lamp, and kept the house,  
And gathered "John o' Groats," and scallops  
on the strand.  
'Of course you seize my story by the end,  
The "how it came about," you can't, I hope.  
Pray grant me patience in my maundering tale.  
Don't laugh—I'll tell you—'twas a telescope!  
'FOR THE BOY GROWING UNTO MAN'S ESTATE,  
SPENT MANY AN HOUR GAZING THROUGH A  
GLASS,  
WATCHING A LITTLE NOOK UPON THE SHORE,  
WHERE DAILY WAS THE MAIDEN WONT TO PASS.

'And presently he launched a little skiff,  
Made from some scudrift cast upon the shore,  
And spread abroad his tiny cloud of sail,  
And sailed away to sunny Hulin-Mör.

'But I must reach my moral, so shall skip  
The tender meeting on the yellow strand,  
And tell you how it fell upon a day,  
The lovers wandered seaward hand in hand.

'And still she cried, "Say, Owen, am I fair?"  
And as he answered his rough voice grew soft,  
And gravely said, "Yes, dearest; fair to me;"  
As he had answered many a time and oft.

'Then suddenly she plucked her hand away,  
And flung at him a pretty puckered frown;  
"Am I not fair in other eyes?" she cried;  
"Fair as the maidens in the far-off town?"

'And as he gravely smiled, he took her hand,  
And answer made—"Nay, 'tis a thing of taste;  
I loved you ere I touched this plump round arm,  
Or laid a finger on your dainty waist.

"LOVED ERE I KNEW A FEATURE OF YOUR FACE,  
WAS BLIND BEFORE I SAW THE DIMPLE THERE!  
WHAT IF MY LOVE'S A GHOUL TO ALL BESIDE!  
SO, DEAREST, YOU ARE STILL MY FINEST  
FAIR."

Then I transcribed the verses with great care, writing the seventh verse and the last in huge capitals, that they might point the moral I felt a delicacy in drawing more openly, and I considered this as a decidedly telling hit.

By this time my poor Muse was pumped dry. Yet still undaunted, I cried, 'Now for Helena's! Doubtless the villain will write her half a dozen, at least, so I shall confine myself to a *réchauffé*; some good standard verses will be very respectful and respectable.' So I cast about in my mind what poet should be honoured by selecting from. Of right, I ought to have told her 'her eyes were lodestars, and her tongue's sweet air, &c.,' but I had never heard her tongue, and what swayed me most of all was that the rest of the passage was exceedingly unmanageable.

I took down Tommy Moore, but the Hibernian bard was so hackneyed, and I got so tired of his everlasting howl about liberty and wine, that I dropped him over the back of my sofa; and leaving him on the floor, fell to work on Byron. He was endless, enough to confuse one's brain to search in him, so I hurled him after his dear Tommy, and tried Shelley. 'I arise from



dreams of thee,' is good, but worn out, and, besides, too strong for a Bravo's Bride, as I had now accustomed myself to consider Helena to be; I read the last lines, thought of Christmas Eve, and that 'she was another's,' and sent Shelley after his friend Byron.

At this period of my life I was much given to poetry, and had cheap copies of all the popular poems of the day. Yet I found it very hard to select one. The good verses were too common; the bad too bad. Then in my search I crossed the Atlantic, and in a happy hour took down the works of Edgar Allan Poe, a cheap copy, now, alas! out of print, in fancy (very) boards, with a good deal of scarlet and yellow on the covers.

Here I found the nicest, tiniest set of verses, and so near the end of the book, that I flattered myself it was not every fellow who had read so far. These are the lines I wrote out for Helena, drawing a fine capital letter at the beginning of each verse, in what I then considered a very high style of art.

Some apology is due to the well-educated reader for the insertion of verses I have since discovered are exceedingly common; but it may just chance that some greenhorn, in the same state of blessed ignorance that I then was, may be among my readers; so for him I transcribe, and to him dedicate my verses.

'Helen! thy beauty is to me  
Like those Nicotian barks of yore,  
That gently o'er a perfumed sea  
The weary wayworn wanderer bore  
To his own native shore.  
'On desperate seas long wont to roam,  
Thy hyacinth air, thy classic face,  
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home  
To the glory that was Greece,  
And the grandeur that was Rome.  
'See in yon brilliant window niche  
How statue-like I see thee stand,  
The agate lamp within thy hand.  
Ah! Psyche, from the regions which  
Are holy land.'

My brains had been so much taxed in producing Herminia's original valentine, that I felt very happy indeed to be able to produce Helena's at such a cheap rate; and really, when these verses were all fairly written out in an ornamental style, I felt quite

as proud of them as if they were indeed my very own composition; nay, at times, I began to imagine they were little airy trifles I had thrown off in moments stolen from severer studies, and not Edgar Allan Poe's at all.

I put each valentine into an envelope, and the two envelopes into one larger one, sealing it with a very large seal that had been my grandfather's in days when old gentlemen wore their watches with a bunch of seals attached to them by a broad black ribbon.

To address a letter to people whose names I did not know, may to some people appear a difficulty; but I soon got over that.

'To the young ladies at  
'No. 20, ——— Street,  
'(One each,)'

seemed a simple solution of the difficulty; and to bed at last I went, very tired, but but very proud of my night's work.

The next day, the 13th, I determined they should be posted; and, after keeping the letter back until it was impossible it could be delivered before the next morning, I sent the servant to drop it into the nearest pillar-post.

Up to this time, not a doubt of the propriety of thus intruding my muse on people I did not know had ever crossed my mind. To be impertinent was my last thought; and the whole business was so much an effusion of feeling, that I overlooked the possible appearance of the matter to a cool matter-of-fact Paterfamilias of the nineteenth century. Suffice it to say that, besides my feelings being strongly enlisted in my own behalf, I had sufficient self-conceit to pass the rest of the evening in a state of tranquillity and egotistical meditation which a king might envy, or a prime minister, on the eve of a dissolution, covet.

It was about twelve o'clock the next day, when, a new batch of novels having arrived from my foe at the circulating library, I had curled myself up on the sofa to make an inspection of the parcel, and decide which volume should be honoured by the first perusal, when

the door opened, and my landlady's 'slavey' announced 'a gentleman.'

Now, a visitor, especially at this hour, was an unprecedented occurrence. Occasionally, of an evening, some of my fellow-clerks would drop in; but a caller at noon was a world's wonder. But, fancy my astonishment when I recognized Helena and Hermis's father. I got white and red by turns; jumped up off the sofa, staggered, almost fell, and gasped out an invitation to my visitor to be seated. He took the chair I pointed to; and I took one despairing look at his face. One glance was enough. In it I read how my impertinence was about to be punished; figuratively speaking, I saw he had on the black cap. For the first time I saw my conduct in its true light. Yes, before one word had been spoken on either side.

'Your name, I believe, is Bennett?' the Herrpapa said first.

'Yes,' I said, pumping up my courage, and, though feeling dreadfully guilty, determined to face the matter like a man. 'Yes, Gilbert Bennett.'

There was a long pause. Either of us must break it; and I said in my heart, 'No. 20, let it be you.'

'Mr. Bennett,' at last he said, 'I am going to ask you a question as a gentleman, and I expect you to answer me as such.'

I bowed my head in an ashamed silence.

He took a letter from his pocket, and, unfolding the contents—two sheets—laid envelope and all before me on the table.

'Did you write those?'

With a great effort, swallowing my feelings at a gulp, I said, 'Yes, sir.'

'And what have you to say in defence of yourself, Mr. Bennett?'

'Say!' I cried; 'I have nothing to say, sir, except that I did not mean it as impertinence.'

'It seems,' he said, with a half-smile, 'that you succeeded in that without much effort.'

'Sir,' I said, interrupting him, 'I have been half mad with illness and loneliness; I have had no other pleasure, for three months, but see-

ing them go in and out: that is the only plea I have to offer.'

'Yes,' he said, 'you must have been half mad, indeed, to have presumed so far.'

'Until you came into the room, it never occurred to me I had done what was wrong; believe me, I would not offend them for worlds: as I told you before, they are the only pleasure I have had in life all these months.'

'By "them" may I understand you mean my daughters?'

'Yes,' I said; 'and the days I do not see them I am unutterably miserable, and at night I cannot sleep.'

This was putting it strong; but I thought I saw signs of his wrath being appeased, and tried the despairing penitent dodge.

'Then, when you sent these verses, you did it in all sincerity?'

'On my honour as a gentleman, I did.'

'I cannot understand it at all,' No. 20 said, looking at me as if I were a dangerous lunatic who might at any moment become outrageous and unmanageable.

'I should like to put a few questions to you, Mr. Bennett. What do you know of my daughters? Where did you first see them?'

'I began at the beginning, and told him—not everything I had seen, but everything I had felt, since I had first observed my opposite neighbours; showed him my post of observation; and wound up with an abject apology, bringing all manner of special pleading to bear on my own case.

'And now,' I said, 'will you have the apology in writing?' And as I spoke I drew my desk over to me and opened it.

'No,' he said; 'for two reasons I shall dispense with that. First, because you answered me like a gentleman, without evasion or subterfuge; and secondly, because you are young, and I do believe, have done this thoughtlessly, without intent to offend, and are very unlikely to do such a thing again. But, I tell you candidly, I must take some means to prevent such a system of espionage being successful in future.

The privacy of domestic life must not be invaded by one's opposite neighbours. I am going down to a furnishing-house to-day, to order blinds which shall effectually check your prying in future.'

'As you put it, I agree with you,' I said, mournfully; 'and no punishment could be too great; but still—'

'Still what?' he asked, as I hesitated.

'If you would only trust me,' I said, 'I give you my word of honour that, cost what it may, the blinds shall be on my window, and not on yours. I shall cease to watch your house from this day; and, if you are still doubtful of me, I shall change my lodgings. You do not know what such a promise costs me; probably you set a light value on it.'

He pondered for a few minutes, and then, as if he had not heard me, asked me—

'Where do you come from?'

From Hempton-in-the-Marshes. My father is dead, and my mother has married again. My father was rector of Hempton; and I only wish my stepfather was more like him. I should never have been here,' I cried, angrily; 'but he persuaded my mother against letting me go to college.'

'What was your father's college?'

No. 20 said, more courteously than he had yet spoken.

'St. John's, Oxford,' I said, proudly; 'and he distinguished himself there, too.'

'I remember him,' said my visitor; 'I am a St. John's man myself; and there could scarcely have been two Gilbert Bennetts. Yes, I knew him well.'

'Then,' I said, vehemently, rising to my feet, 'I am ten times more sorry for having insulted your family; if anything had been wanting to bring me to a sense of my unworthiness, you have done it by speaking of my father. I wish you would tell me how I could make reparation, sir. I am ready to do anything in my power.'

'Well, boy,' he said, 'you do appear sorry; and I am bound to believe your father's son. I accept your promise about the windows;

but remember, it is to be carried out in the spirit as well as the letter.'

I groaned an assent.

'And now,' he continued, 'half forgiveness is unjust; I shall tell you further what I expect; that when you are well enough to go out, you will come across and dine with us, and make the acquaintance of your divinities behind the blinds. They are very good girls; but the best cure for you is to know them closely, and I venture to say you will not find them half so charming as your imagination has pictured.'

For a moment I was speechless.

'You do not mean it!' I cried, joyfully.

'I generally mean what I say. When will you be able to come?'

'How good of you, sir! I can come any day. I am quite well enough for that.'

'Very well, let it be to-day. Sharp six. You know the house,' he added, laughing.

'But, sir,' I said, almost beside myself, 'your name? May I ask your name?'

'My name is Walton. Good morning, Mr. Bennett.' And my visitor took his leave.

Here was a wind-up to the affair. When the hall door shut, I got up on the table and gave three cheers. I was just about to rush to the window, to see whether he went straight home, or, as usual, into the City, when I remembered my promise, and slunk into my bedroom, as much depressed as was possible, considering I had such a delightful prospect before me for the evening.

My first act was to take out my evening suit of clothes, which had not seen the light since I left the maternal home. My next was to brush them thoroughly, a piece of labour which can only be appreciated by a person in the weak state of health in which I then was. But was I not going to dine at No. 20?

Never, not even on my wedding morning (a few months ago), did I bestow such care on my toilet as that memorable occasion. I sent out and purchased six new white ties, but after trying them all, one after another, and being dissatisfied

with the result, was obliged to go in an ordinary black one.

Grief the First.

Then my collar was unsatisfactory. How is it that laundresses will not turn over a fellow's collars close up to the band, both corners alike? I profanely wished my washerwoman certain punishments nameless to ears polite.

Collars were Grief the Second.

Then my neckstud rolled away, and find it I could not though I searched every corner.

Grief the Third.

But grief of griefs, worst of all, when I got into my coat, I found I had grown so much since my illness, that the cuff of the coat came barely to where the cuff of my shirt began.

Grief the Fourth.

In a word, I was in a fever of despair long before my toilet was completed, and barely able to drag my weary limbs across the street about five minutes before six o'clock.

Had I been stronger and heartier, I might have detected a smirk, slightly subdued, on the face of the maid who showed me upstairs, for I believe my history had even reached the basement story of No. 20; but I was too exhausted by such unwonted exertion to be conscious of anything but that an introduction was before me to Helena and Hermia.

I advanced into the drawing-room, saw four people, had my hand shaken by Mr. Walton, and in one great effort to make three bows to three ladies, staggered and fell fainting against some one, Paterfamilias, I believe. When I recovered consciousness, I was on the sofa, and Mr. Walton standing by me, Mrs. Walton was giving me a glass of wine, and Hermia stood at a little distance with the decanter in her hand.

I blurted out some apology, and Mr. Walton said in a good-humoured, kindly way—

'Well, you are a pretty fellow! This is what you call being quite able to go out to dinner! I have a good mind to tell your doctor!'

But I declared I was perfectly well, and only a little giddy with

being unaccustomed to the open air, and was very indignant at not being believed. I was not allowed to go down to dinner; but the parlour maid (now minus the smirk) brought me up some soup, of which no praises could be too great; after my landlady's watery decoctions, this was indeed nectar. Other things equally good followed, and I fell asleep at last, not without a slight dread that I might have been asleep all the time, and would awake presently in my own lodgings.

I did not, however, but awoke in No. 20, to see Helena and Hermia reading by the firelight, as I had seen them dozens of times before. I was afraid to stir, lest it should break the spell that was over me, but lay watching them, and wishing every minute would be an hour long.

Then the parents came up, and we had lights, and a little music of the pleasantest soothing kind. I never hear Mozart's masses without remembering that evening; and when the 'Agnus Dei' from the First Mass is played by any one, even now, I feel that inexpressible peace steal over my soul that fell upon it that night, when I heard Helena Walton touch it for the first time so tenderly, with a deep feeling of its wondrous beauty shining out of every sentence.

I went home at last. Mr. Walton saw me into my own room, and charged me to go at once to bed, and though I obeyed him, sleep was out of the question.

Not so charming as I imagined! Yes, a hundred times more charming! No wonder I could not sleep. Again and again came the picture of the drawing-room I had left. Mr. Walton lying in an armchair by the fire, telling me I need not talk unless I felt quite able and inclined, Hermia and her mother at their work, with Hermia's head bent over hers just within my view, and Helena at the piano, heightening the beauty and enjoyment of the scene.

Next day I was too tired to rise; but in the evening Mr. and Mrs. Walton kindly came over to see me; I was in the drawing-room, then, and Mrs. Walton honoured me by

pouring out tea for us, though I own to feeling for the first time that the cups were coarse and common, and that the bread in a cheap japanned breadbasket was not what she was accustomed to.

After this, I spent many an evening at No. 20, and the girls and I became fast friends, even to laughing over the two valentines, which, at their urgent entreaty, I returned to them, for Mr. Walton had left them with me the day he called. I was soon established on that confidential footing in the family, which acknowledges, as an undoubted fact, that the visitor was to have the privilege of mending the pens, glueing the work-boxes, splicing the fans, and going the messages, and, ah! happy fate! last Christmas, I went with them to Covent Garden for the holly, and entered into violent competition with the villain (who properly was called Smith) and Helena in the matter of decorating—they persisting in declaring Hermia and I were a pair of bunglers.

These were not their real names, however, though I have loved to call them so throughout my story. She whom I called Helena was properly Joan, and the fairy Hermia had been baptized Agnes; and I lay down my pen to laugh at the recollection of the evening when my thus naming them came to be known.

I had come one evening uninvited, saying, as an excuse to Mrs. Walton, that I had brought Miss Helena some crests and monograms, and Miss Hermia some Honolulu postage stamps.

'Miss Helena and Miss Hermia?' Mamma Walton said, inquiringly.

I stammered out, 'Your daughters,' which satisfied her, not being of an inquisitive disposition; but I told the girls afterwards, amusing them no little.

I said, 'You know when I am here I address you as Miss Agnes; but when I am at home I still think of you as Hermia.'

And this anecdote was soon added to the lists of jests we had in common; and if I brought two bouquets, as I often did when I knew a party was approaching, I ticketed them, 'Helena's' and 'Hermia's.'

In due course of time Joan became Mrs. Smith, and went off northwards with the villain, and about the same time I became, how it matters not, a man of independent means.

St. Valentine's Day was drawing near again, only a few weeks off, and I was sitting in the dining-room, after dinner, with Mr. and Mrs. Walton and Hermia.

'You will only have one valentine to send this year, Gilbert,' Mr. Walton said, with a sigh. 'It used to be "one each," eh? Ah! we shall miss Joan!'

'By Jove!' I said to myself, 'here is an opening not to be despised.'

'No, sir,' I said, 'I am going to ask you for a valentine for myself. I am sure you know as well as I do I want Hermia—I mean Agnes. You and Mrs. Walton know me so well now I have nothing to say, but that I shall try every day to be more worthy of her.'

I was too husky to say more, and Agnes having slipped from the room, I had lost a good deal of courage.

There was a little silence, and Mr. Walton shook my hand silently.

'It is what we fathers come to,' he said.

I rose and went round to where Mrs. Walton sat by the fire in an armchair. There were tears on her face.

'And you?' I asked tremblingly. 'Agnes must decide,' she said; and though I knew how that would be, I was glad of the permission to make my escape, and going up stairs, found her sitting by the drawing-room fire.

She had not expected me up so soon, but there was no need to ask her then, for I knew it long before, that I had found my real valentine.

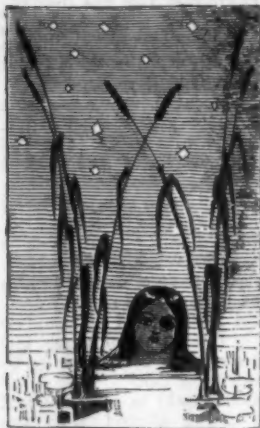
I got her altogether into my care on the next St. Valentine's Day, and we were then, and are now, as happy as the summer day is long.

My wife signs herself Agnes Bennett: it is legally her name; but when we sit together by our own fireside, her hand in mine, or, better still, she sits upon my knee, I call her by the name by which I knew her first—and loved her—Hermia.

## THE LADY IN MUSLIN.

## CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH RICHARD GAUNT DECLARES HIMSELF UNROMANTIC.



E were sitting comfortably in Dick's room, smoking our after-dinner cigars, and enjoying as much of fresh early summer air as is permitted to make its way through the open windows of London 'first floors,' talking the while in that easy fashion which is the result of intimacy, philosophical quietude of mind, a good dinner, and an excellent cigar.

If I recollect rightly, the leading subject of our conversation—though of course relieved by pleasant digressions, suggested by our employment—was, the spirit of the age.

'Practical, no doubt,' I replied to a lengthy remark of Gaunt's on the unpoetical, unromantic leaning of the civilization of the nineteenth century. 'Yet, after all, one can't be surprised at it. The time preceding the realization of desire is the time of imagination—of high-coloured expectations. The realization

must needs be practical. I regard the present pitch of civilization as the realism necessarily resulting from the idealism of the chivalric ages. Perhaps to make another step we shall have to go through another poetic or ideal period higher in degree than the last, and so on.'

Dick smoked on—he was not imaginatively inclined, so I was neither surprised nor discouraged at the composed silence with which he received an idea that, I flatter myself, was a little novel.

'You don't know much of Tennyson, Gaunt, do you?' I said, putting down my cigar, and taking a lately published volume of the poet from my pocket.

'No, can't understand him,' was Dick's curt reply. 'Never could understand any of your mysticisms. At college, I always made a horrid hash of metaphysics, and all that kind of stuff.'

'Yes,' I replied, gently. I remembered my excellent friend had made a considerable hash of not only all such 'stuff,' but other practical kinds of knowledge too, without, however, falling much in his own estimation.

'The only poet I ever read is Byron, and I skip him where he grows, too—you know—up in the clouds,' continued Dick, grinning pleasantly, and letting the fragrant smoke lazily get out of his mouth as it could. 'As you said before, I belong to the age, and as a respectable inhabitant of the world in the nineteenth century, I concern myself with only the practical and the get-at-able; I never did a romantic or sentimental thing in my life.'

I could quite believe it. As I looked in my friend's brown, rather stolid, countenance, I had not the least doubt of it.

He was a strongly-built, tall, powerful-looking fellow, with a large head, covered by thick, curly, brown hair—reddy-brown whiskers and monstaches hiding at least a third part of a face that was certainly not intellectual, either in outline or expression; but then there was something so hearty and honest in the dark full eyes, that, in looking in Richard Gaunt's face, the last thing you troubled yourself about was his intellect.



I am—well—I won't call myself an intellectual person; all I say is, that I am an admirer, and I believe understander, of Tennyson. I have a fondness for German literature, besides which, I dabble in reviews, and magazines; and I flatter myself, the satire and sharp-edged wit, which you, my dear reader, appreciate so well, are not the only weapons I could bring to defend myself, were my right to the title of a 'literary man' disputed.

I only make this allusion to myself to throw a stronger light on the virtues of Mr. Gaunt. A man, I say,

of my stamp, in looking at Richard's face, forgot to notice his want of intellect; and in those pleasant, kind eyes of his, found something which made him forget his favourite synonym for a human being, 'mind,' and feel glad to call their possessor 'friend.'

We were silent after that candid declaration of Dick's, I pursuing a train of ideas that our conversation had suggested, Gaunt lazily employed in sipping his wine, puffing out his smoke, and watching his opposite neighbour, a young lady of artistic talents, who, seated at her



piano, was giving us, or I suppose him, the benefit of some dreadfully high-pitched songs, gratis.

'She didn't sing badly last night, at Sadler's Wells,' remarked Gaunt, breaking in on my reflections. 'I think I shall go with Philipps, and sup with her next Friday. She's not bad-looking either, is she, Mark?'

'Not at all,' I answered drily; 'and I've no doubt, in a theatre,

where full scope is given to her rather powerful voice, she is a charming singer; as a neighbour, I confess I should find her inconvenient.'

Dick grinned again, in a little quizzical way, that was his nearest approach to the satiric.

'I understand you, my boy. Well, you know, it's one of the peculiarities of the age of "Realism."'

What 'it' meant, I didn't inquire.

I am a stern moralist, but I don't like discussing such cases of 'it' with my friend Gaunt.

I took another glass of claret, and lighted another weed; Dick did the same, and drew his chair a little nearer the open window, for which he was evidently rewarded by some sign from over the way, for he certainly smiled, and suddenly waved his cigar in a manner that was otherwise both objectless and absurd.

I made no remark. 'Chacun à son goût' is my motto, with a mental shrug of the shoulder; but I drew back into the shade of the window curtain, and began sketching an article I meant for the next month's 'London Society,' which should contain all the pith of the sentiments my friend's conduct awoke in me, regarding not only himself, but society in general.

I was disturbed by the postman's knock.

Mrs. Briggs herself—Dick was a favourite of hers—brought up the letters, and as my worthy friend happened at the moment to have his head stretched out of the window and his eyes quite engrossed by 'over the way,' she gave them into my hand, with a few pleasant remarks on my own healthful looks, &c.

Mrs. B. knew I was Gaunt's dear friend, so, like a skilful diplomatist, she cultivated my acquaintance with smiles and care, although, as I once overheard her say to some one who was making inquiries concerning me, she didn't know as if I was a 'real gent, for I wore boots as had been mended, only three shirts a week, and was a newspaper writer.'

A man who takes letters in his hand, naturally examines them, and without any very prying curiosity I turned over the two envelopes and examined the writing and postmarks.

Both were from Blackheath; and to my surprise, instead of the manly handwriting of Dick's usual correspondents, one bore most unmistakably the direction of a lady's hand, and the other, to my still greater astonishment, the unsteady round characters of a child's!

Now I knew Richard Gaunt's history and genealogy pretty well, and

was thoroughly aware that he had neither sister, aunt, nor cousin of any degree, in the feminine gender. The Gaunts were a singularly unprolific race, consisting most unbrokenly of a line of only sons. Indeed, I doubt if such a person as a *Miss Gaunt* had ever existed, in their family at least.

I turned over the letters meditatively, then I looked at my friend, who was in the act of pressing the tips of his fingers to his moustache in a very unmistakable fashion. 'Richard,' I exclaimed sternly, a rather unkind idea concerning Mr. Gaunt's character suddenly dashing through my mind.

Dick popped his head back as if electrified.

'What the deuce is up?' he exclaimed sharply. 'Can't you let a fellow alone, Mark, to do what he chooses?'

'Here are two letters,' I answered serenely.

'Well! and what of that? Do you think that the arrival of a letter is such a rare and important event that you must disturb a man just—just—ah!—she's gone!' added Dick, ruefully looking again towards over the way. 'Confound you, Mark!'

I was quite accustomed to compliments of this kind from my bosom friend, and I received his remarks with a philosophical silence, merely throwing him the letters.

Dick took them crossly, but no sooner did he glance at the lady's handwriting, than his eye lighted up with sudden interest. He hastily broke the seal, and turned eagerly to catch the few gleams of daylight that remained.

I felt puzzled. I had no idea that there was any secret in Dick Gaunt's life that was hidden from me. He was not a man for mysteries, and all his romance—if, indeed, his love-making could be termed as such—was most frankly exposed to the gaze of all who chose to look.

I roused myself from the kind of affectionate carelessness with which I generally regarded Dick's doings, and watched him curiously.

The first letter read, he carefully re-folded it, and then took up the other, which he examined with a smiling wonder, as if pleased yet

considerably puzzled by it. He stroked and curled his moustache excitedly, screwed up his eyes, turned about the paper, and evidently did his best to possess himself of its contents. I could not help thinking that Dick's young correspondent must have some strong hold on his affections to induce him to give himself such evident exertion to make him or her out.

I looked very seriously at my friend, as, apparently despairing of success, he merely glanced at the fourth page, and then folding up the little blotty letter, slipped it with the other into his pocket. I waited a moment or two expecting some remark, but Dick neither returned my look nor spoke a word.

'I had no idea you had juvenile correspondents, Richard,' I said, breaking the silence, and in a pleasant confidence-inviting tone. With a cool, daring opponent like myself, I knew that he was a bad fencer, so I was quite prepared to see him start a little, look uncomfortable, and exclaim, 'Eh!—oh! didn't you?' and then awkwardly attempt to act the natural and unembarrassed, by striking fusties and applying them to the wrong end of his cigar.

'I thought you had no female relations, Dick,' I continued; 'no bothering womankind, you once told me.'

'But I didn't tell you I had no female friends, I suppose,' Dick answered gruffly.

'Friends! Oh no, certainly. Don't you choose your friends rather young though?'

Gaunt did not look up or reply, but even in the growing twilight I saw the phenomenon of Mr. Richard Gaunt *blushing*, whether with conscious guilt, shame, or anger I knew not.

We smoked silently for at least half an hour after that, I feeling not exactly at my ease, Gaunt with a grimness that was his imitation of sulkiness.

Actually sulky he was not, for he answered civilly enough any question I put to him, passing me the tobacco canister with his usual alacrity directly he saw that my pipe was empty, and suggesting brandy

and water, as he always did as soon as a certain time had elapsed from our finishing our claret; but he was not conversationally inclined; he smoked lazily and almost musingly; and I particularly remarked that it was in vain our opposite neighbour seated herself at the open window in the full light of the lamp in her most becoming attitude. There sat Dick in his arm-chair silent and grave, apparently quite oblivious of ever having felt the slightest interest in over the way, at any rate quite unconscious of her presence.

How long this unsocial state of affairs might have continued, and whether my delicate silence might at length have melted Gaunt's grimness into friendly confidence I cannot say, for we were suddenly disturbed by noisy boots and noisy voices on the stairs, and in came Phillips, Brown, and Smith, all smoking and all jovial, from a very late dinner, to make us join their expedition to—well—no matter where.

A philosophical mind seeks knowledge everywhere, and what knowledge is preferable to that of human nature? 'Know thyself!' said the Delphic oracle.

'Now the study of human nature,' as I once remarked to Dick, 'in the streets, in a ball-room, or at the Opera, is perhaps not so stern or decorous as among the folios of the British Museum, but it is none the less the study of human nature. A well-disciplined mind pursues philosophical speculation everywhere and anywhere.'

To which Dick replied—

'Of course it does. And it's much pleasanter to study here in this fashion, than in those musty old libraries.'

## CHAPTER II.

### DICK'S JUVENILE CORRESPONDENT.

The long vacation came at length, and as London grew emptier and emptier, and hotter and hotter, I began to shut up my books, and over my writing, and think yearningly of country air and fishing-rods, or, in my more energetic moods,

of excursion trains and steam-packets, &c.

The last summer Gaunt and I had taken ourselves to St. Petersburg, and had found each other such good company and so conveniently paired—I being able to make people understand our various wants, and he to pay for them—that on our return we had engaged each other to repeat the attempt the following summer, and in our tour take in the capitals of Norway and Sweden.

During the last two or three weeks, however, Dick had been visibly less eager in planning our voyage; once or twice he had even vaguely hinted that perhaps he would not be able to go—still, he never told me out plainly that he wished to give up the journey, neither did he mention having formed any other plan for spending the long vacation. I was rather annoyed, therefore, to receive one morning a hurried scrawl from him to say that he was obliged to give up his cruise north, as business was taking him off that same day to Norfolk. He was extremely sorry, he added, and hoped I should find some more agreeable manner of passing the vacation.

Dick was a very goodhearted fellow, and not generally careless of others' convenience; and it was quite inconsistent with his character to thus coolly break his engagement and leave me to shift for myself.

'Such is the world!' I exclaimed to myself with a contemptuous smile, as I sat that melting morning over my eggs and coffee; 'all miserable selfishness! *His* business indeed! and I should like to know what I am to do with myself.'

Meteorological extremes are trying even to the most philosophically disposed. (I wonder if the philosopher would have stood absorbed in thought during twenty-four hours, with the temperature 10° below zero, or under the noonday sun of tropical India?) and when the affliction of a small unairy London apartment on a hot August morning is added to the disappointment of an agreeable journey gratis, a tired mind and a light purse feel considerably aggrieved. Mine did. I crumpled

up Dick's note and tossed it into the grate, calling it 'heartless' and himself 'hollow,' and for the future I vowed to forswear friendship.

After breakfast I set myself to the irritating task of arranging my pecuniary affairs.

Should I have to accept Brown's invitation to pass a fortnight with him in the Isle of Wight, the only one of the numerous invitations, that, counting on my expedition north, I had not refused? or could I manage a continental trip on my own account? I had been lavish of expenditure lately, not expecting to have to provide for my holiday; so I thought drearily of Brown and the Isle of Wight, or, still more drearily, of a visit home to that very retired village in the fens where my infant eyes first saw the light.

Such meditation did not tend to relieve my angry feelings towards Dick, nor to restore that composure of mind which Epictetus so strongly recommends concerning matters over which we have no control; indeed, so irritating was the combined effects of that letter and the high temperature, that, as I sat pondering over a heavy article I was forced to finish that morning for the '— Magazine,' and for which I had to refer to that respectable philosopher, instead of reading admiringly his remarks, I could not help distorting my features and calling him an 'old fool!'

Alas! for the duplicity of man's nature! From his youth upwards had I known Richard Gaunt and believed him to be the sincerest of mortals—the most openhearted of friends!

That evening, having nothing particular to do, after the posting of a letter to Brown, accepting his invitation, I took a hansom and drove down to Dick's lodgings to fetch some books that I had left there. Perhaps I had also just a faint intention of gathering from Mrs. Briggs any information she might have as to the cause of Mr. Gaunt's sudden departure. Of course I had no idea of prying into

his affairs by underhand means. I never dreamt of questioning Mrs. Briggs. Still, if she should drop any hint that to my wise head would be sufficient, why, there would be no harm—none whatever.

The blinds were all drawn and the windows of Dick's rooms were all closed. 'He's off, at any rate,' I muttered as I jumped from the cab and ran up the steps.

My knock was quickly answered by some faint efforts within, at turning a key or jingling a chain, and after a moment or two the door was pushed slowly open, and, to my surprise, a little girl in a white muslin frock and pink sash danced through the aperture and caught hold of me. I was taken a little aback, particularly when the small young lady clasped her hands, exclaiming 'Oh!' in a frightened tone, and then added, 'I thought it was godpapa Dick.'

I was not used to children, and I didn't quite know what to say or do. To take off my hat to that small white frock and pink sash would have been ridiculous; but to stoop down and caress the dignified little head that turned up its abashed face as blushing as any girl of eighteen, would have been impertinent. 'No,' I said after a moment's hesitation, 'I am not godpapa Dick. Who may he be? Is it Mr. Gaunt?'

The child turned immediately into the house. 'Yes,' she said in a quiet tone; 'but don't ask me questions, please.'

I followed her into the hall, and was about to ascend the stairs when she turned, and, barring the way with her little flounced-out figure, said gravely, 'I don't think you had better come up stairs. I don't think godpapa Gaunt wants me to see anyone.'

I could not help smiling at the very simple manner in which Dick's evident confidante was exposing his secrets.

'Don't you,' I answered laughing; 'and do you think I should see you better upstairs than here at the present moment?'

What the young lady would have replied was lost to me, for at that

moment Mrs. Briggs came panting up from her domains below.

'*La, miss!* run up stairs now, do! there's a dear,' she exclaimed soothingly. 'It's Mr. Gaunt's niece, sir,' she added, turning to me. 'Her and his sister came quite unexpected-like this morning.'

'Oh, indeed!' I answered, looking towards the child, who stood perched on the stairs, listening with a strange earnestness to what Mrs. Briggs said. 'And so you are Dick's little niece,' I added, smiling, and remembering that Mr. Gaunt had neither brother, sister, or cousin within the sixth degree.

The little girl hung her head and replied by an inquiring look from her dark eyes.

'Mr. Gaunt's gone out with his sister, sir. He told me to say he was out to everybody, and not to let any gent into his room on account of Miss being there,' Mrs. B. said, looking rather puzzled as she was me begin to mount the stairs.

'But for me, Mrs. Briggs,' I said gently; 'I am different, you know. I think I may go up.'

'Well, sir, I know you're Mr. Gaunt's perticklerest friend; but them's my orders: p'raps you'll mention to Mr. Gaunt as I told you.'

'Oh, yes! all right,' I replied; 'you won't be afraid of my sitting in the room with you, will you?' I asked in my kindest, most winning tones of the child.

'I shouldn't be afraid of you,' she replied gravely; 'but you musn't talk to me, because I promised godpapa not to answer anyone's questions.'

'Very good: I will be most discreetly silent,' was my answer; and with that understanding the little flounced figure bounded up stairs leaving me the path clear.

'Dick's niece!' thought I, as I threw myself into his arm-chair and gazed at the face, bending studiously over a number of 'Punch,' but looking up every now and then to cast a quick, sly glance at me.

Large, dark, creole eyes—unchild-like in the sadness of their expression—small, regular features, and curls of that blue-blackness that speaks of foreign lands.

Dick's niece! Dick's god-daughter!

There are strange things in this world—inexplicable, moral, and physical phenomena; and perhaps the uncleship of Mr. Gaunt to this little nine-year-old lady was one of them. At any rate, as I sat there pondering over it, I mentally muttered the words with which I commenced this episode.

Richard Gaunt, the man who in his every word, every act, every

sentiment seemed to breathe openness and truth, whose very roughness and simplicity seemed to make a romantic mystery impossible!—to find him thus suddenly surrounded in inexplicable relationships, shook my faith in the whole human race.

I waited for half an hour, keeping most sacredly my agreement with my fair little friend; but my reflections grew gloomy, and I began to grow impatient at Gaunt's absence,



when suddenly the child exclaimed gravely—

'Why don't you smoke a cigar? we never used to mind smoke.'

'We!' thought I, wondering if the young lady used the first person plural in a literal sense, or with a child's irreverence for grammar.

'Don't you? Why, what a sensible mamma you must have got, to have taught you that,' I replied, proceeding to act upon her suggestion.

'Mamma didn't teach me,' she

answered simply. 'Godpapa Dick is a long time coming, isn't he?' she added, sighing heavily; and pushing back her tiny hand through her curls, she leant her head upon it, and looked as sad and sentimental as any young woman far advanced in her teens.

'You're fond of your uncle, aren't you?' I said, rather amused; and she answered, 'Yes, very,' with an energy which shot sudden fire into her large eyes.

'Do you often see him?' I asked



gently, my curiosity getting the better of my promise.

'Not very. Since I came here—I mean to England—I've seen him oftener; but before, I don't remember very well. It seems a long time ago, you see,—a very long time. It was not then—no,' she added dreamily. 'I think I used to see mamma oftener.'

'And your papa, usen't you to see him?' I asked cautiously.

'No,' answered the child, 'never. I never saw him; I used to pray for him; I always used, because mamma told me to. She used to say, "Cecile, if you don't pray God to bless your papa, God won't love you, or bless you." So of course I did.'

'Quite right,' I said approvingly. 'And where is your mamma now; is she out with Mr. Gaunt?'

Cecile raised her head, and glanced up at me, the dreamy look quite disappearing from her eyes; and clasping her small creamy-looking hands together on her lap: 'Don't ask questions, please,' she said in her childish, half-frightened manner. 'You promised you wouldn't ask questions.'

There was something wonderfully taking in the half-simple, half-theatrical manner of this child; and I should have felt myself to be quite a brute if I had not responded to her entreaty, and desisted from questioning her.

I tried to make her acquaintance in some other manner. I showed her my favourite pipe; and she condescended to draw near, and took no small delight in tucking the weed into it, with her taper tiny fingers. After that we became more intimate and confidential, and I began to flatter myself that I must have some peculiar talent for winning infantine friendship; for unaccustomed as I was to children, I suited so well to little Cecile's taste, that in another half-hour she was sitting on a stool, just in front of me, chatting most happily, and wasting my tobacco, endeavouring to make cigarettes, and quite making love to me, after her own fashion.

The door opened suddenly upon us whilst we were in that position, and in walked Richard Gaunt!

He started back; little Cecile jumped up. I never moved, but I looked up with, I fancy, a very satirical smile.

'I have been making friends with your juvenile correspondent,' was my first exclamation; 'your charming little niece and godchild, my dear Dick.'

Dick's eyes for an instant lost that pleasant, kind look which I have mentioned to you as being his chief attraction. He looked absolutely angry.

'I don't understand this,' he said in a low growling voice.

'Nor do I,' I answered.

'There are some cases——' Dick began, still in the same disagreeable tone.

'There are,' I interrupted. 'You seem annoyed at my presence, Gaunt. Good evening! Let me assure you, however, that this visit is purely one of chance. Good night!'

I took up my hat, and was striding towards the door, when little Cecile came springing after me.

'No,' she exclaimed, 'don't go—wait a moment. You see, I told you godpapa Gaunt didn't want any one to see me. It was my fault, godpapa, not his,' she added, turning to Gaunt, and stretching out her hands with dignified gesticulations, and growing quite flushed with the energy with which she spoke: 'quite my fault; and he hasn't asked me any questions.'

There was something so ridiculous in this mediation of the little white-froaked, gesticulating figure standing between us two, angry, bearded men—in the protection she extended to the one, while unwittingly she increased the embarrassment of the other—something so very out of the way, and uncommon to either of our experiences, that we both paused;—I smiled, Dick smiled.

'That's right!' Cecile exclaimed approvingly. 'That's right, godpapa, don't be angry.'

'You needn't be in such a hurry, Mark,' Dick said gruffly, and turning away.

And I went back to my seat. I should have been sorry to quarrel with Richard Gaunt.

## CHAPTER III.

## CIGAR CONFIDENCES.

I went back to my seat, and resumed my cigar. Dick stood leaning against the mantelshelf, stroking his moustache meditatively. Cecile sat herself on the footstool, which, however, she took care to draw to a distance from my fauteuil, and contemplated us both gravely. This tableau lasted at least twenty minutes.

‘Mark,’ exclaimed Dick suddenly, after Cecile had been confided to Mrs. Briggs’s maternal care for the night, and we two sat by the open window, puffing away in our usual luxurious, silent, and easy fashion, at our cigars; ‘Mark, I should like to know your opinion, as a man of principle and education, as to whether one’s word of honour, once engaged, may still be regarded as subject to the contingencies of after circumstances?’

I was a little startled by this sudden question. Richard Gaunt and casuistry, was an association of ideas that had never entered my mind, and I was quite unprepared to receive it.

‘My opinion, on such a matter,’ I began, however, after a moment or two’s hesitation, ‘is that undoubtedly, or at least’—I paused—knocked the ashes from my cigar. ‘Such a question, my dear Dick, I can scarcely answer as a generality. Cases of conscience must be argued according to their individual character. To answer that a promise once given must be kept at all hazards, accords little with the liberal morality of the age; but on the other hand, to declare that the keeping of a solemn engagement depends on circumstances, or chances of the future, proclaims a very lax moral indeed.’

My friend smiled. He evidently triumphed in the idea that he had puzzled me.

‘Contingent circumstances,’ I continued loftily, with a slight sneer in return for Mr. Gaunt’s smile, ‘according to some, might read “convenience,” you know.’

‘Exactly,’ Dick answered quickly, and sitting bolt upright. ‘That’s the dounce, Mark!’ he added emphatically.

Had I been of an energetic disposition, I believe during the unusual excitement of the few minutes that followed, I might have made Dick’s little secret my own. I could see it was seething and frothing up in him, like a small Vesuvian eruption, and nothing would have eased him more, than to let out the lava streams in a good gush. But there I sat, lazily watching the evening light fade from the patch of sky visible above the opposite houses; listening to the distant hum of the busy world, which lay beyond our quiet street, and which came up, not disagreeably, through the heavy evening air; and in the quietude of my enjoyment, I felt a little secret superiority, that led me to criticise my friend’s emotion with the eye of a philosopher, rather than sympathise with it, with the feeling of a friend.

As Dick sat there, biting now his nails, and then his pipe; now pulling his moustache, and sighing like a furnace, I regarded him with that serene satisfaction with which a cat looks at a mouse, which she considers so safely within her power, as merely to require her to lift her paw, and give it a tap to make all secure.

I played with my mouse too long.

Mrs. Briggs suddenly popped her head into the room and said that she couldn’t persuade Miss any ways to go to sleep, or even to undress, till she had spoken again to her uncle; so would Mr. Gaunt be kind enough to step up stairs for a minute?

Dick went reluctantly.

When he returned, three minutes after, his excitement was over, he resumed his chair and employment gravely.

‘Mark,’ he exclaimed, after a short silence, ‘suppose a man binds himself by a promise to keep a secret for a certain period; suppose that through after-events the divulgence of that secret to a third party, while it could do no possible wrong to any one concerned, would greatly relieve and free from an em-

barrassing position the man so engaging himself, would he be very dishonourable to break his promise?

'It depends on the nature of the embarrassment,' I replied. 'Should it be merely a matter of personal consequence, strict morality would demand the keeping of such a promise.'

Gaunt was silent.

'Suppose,' he began again, 'that the promise had been given more to ease the weak fears of a dying mind than being of itself important or necessary?'

'A promise is a promise,' I answered, shortly.

Gaunt leant back in his chair, and for more than half an hour the only sound that broke the stillness of the room was his vigorous puffing at his meerschaum.

As the silence continued, and I saw Richard's face grow more and more frowning and determined-looking, I almost repented my severe morality.

'After all,' thought I, as curiosity again resumed her sway, 'there are some cases which bear milder and more liberal treatment.'

'I suppose, Gaunt,' I said, quietly, 'your question had more or less connection with your relationship to little Cecile?'

'Of course,' he answered, shortly; 'but we've settled the point; don't let's bring it up again.'

Dick, like many unintellectual people, is extremely obstinate, and by that tenaciousness of his, seldom fails to carry the day, so I dropped the subject. The solution of the mystery, I felt, was at present distant.

Two days after, when I called at — Street, Mr. Richard Gaunt had left town, and Mrs. Briggs did not know his address.

A week after I was leading a truly rural life with my friend Brown, in the Isle of Wight.

The site of Brown's lodge, as my friend termed his place, must have been chosen with a regard to the strictest seclusion. It was distant from even a village, not to mention any of those gay bustling towns

where it is possible to pass at least one's morning hours without dying of ennui. It fronted the sea, and the nearest approach to anything lively that occupied the long hours of daylight, was watching the ships that appeared in the offing through a large telescope fixed on the lawn of Brown's lodge.

My friend was a botanist and naturalist, and in the pursuit of his pet sciences he found the time pass gaily enough. He would spend whole hours delightedly in diving in shady damp dells and ditches after weeds and flowers. With patient gladness he would watch the ebbing of the tide, and then, with his nether garments tucked up above his knees, his feet bare, he would dabble in the wet sand among the rocks, peep about in crevices and holes, and come back to me with horrid jelly-looking things in his hands, quite radiant with scientific delight.

Of course I had no objection to his finding pleasure in such trifles, but at the same time I did think that, as a companion, he was a bore, and, as a host, frightfully deficient.

Even his library partook of his nature: it was all about flowers and animals; the very magazines he took in were on these subjects. I remember asking him, one wretchedly wet evening, in the fulness of my despair, if he had not got some of the new light literature. He brought me, with the highest eulogiums, 'Life in Normandy.'

'An excellent work,' I said, dolefully, laying it aside, however; 'my friend reviewed it in the S—— R——.'

'Ay, yes, a capital review, wasn't it?' answered Brown.

'He called it simple, homely, and unaffected,' I answered languidly; adding, 'that though books on cookery, angling, and natural history are apt to be wearisome to persons who don't care about zoology or angling, this was an exception to the rule. I recollect the article well. — must have been very kindly disposed when he wrote it. Thank you, my dear Brown. I've no doubt that — was right, and that, though I am not an amateur

in cookery, &c., I shall find "Life in Normandy" highly interesting.'

I pushed the book gently from me, settled myself comfortably on the sofa, and went to sleep.

The next morning the rain was still falling. I rose languidly from my bed, and looked out of the window.

Nothing was to be seen but a dirty, discontented-looking sea; damp sands (for the tide was out), and desolate-looking rocks. Not a vestige of a human being, except where a large drab umbrella, bobbing about like an excited mushroom, indicated that Mr. John Brown was again in pursuit of science.

To my satisfaction, on the breakfast table I found a heap of letters, amongst which I eagerly seized one bearing Dick Gaunt's splashy writing. It had travelled about a little, evidently, by the different directions and post marks; and on opening it, I found the date to be four days back.

It was a short scrawl, telling me that he had met with an accident which kept him to the sofa; that he was awfully disgusted with his solitary life; and that if I was not too agreeably engaged, he wished I would pay him a visit.

'You may fancy things look queerly still,' he added in a postscript, 'but fortunately your disposition is not over-fraught with curiosity; besides, I can endure this no longer.'

These sentences were perfectly intelligible to me; I translated them—'The secret, recollect, must remain a secret, and I invite you to respect it. I have endeavoured to keep it and myself from all eyes; but I am dying of ennui, and I prefer your curiosity to enduring such longer.'

At breakfast, I told Brown that Gaunt was very seriously indisposed, and that I must hasten to him without delay. The naturalist looked a little aghast at being left so suddenly to solitude; but 'friendship's demands,' I remarked to him, 'were inexorable.' And so I packed my portmanteau in an hour, and in the afternoon was safely landed at Portsmouth.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE LADY AT THE RAILWAY STATION.

Dick had not been truthful in telling me he was going to Norfolk.

The little village B—, from which his letter was dated, lies just on the borders of Berkshire, and his choosing such a secluded, and I may say unreasonable place, considering his age, to pass the pleasant August days, passed my comprehension, and was to be set beside the other little eccentricities that had suddenly shown themselves in his conduct.

Pleasantly we steamed through green fields, and golden wheat in the afternoon sunshine. The country looked fresh and summery after the rain, and as I lay back in my soft seat (I always travel first class in the vacation time) I looked out of either window with a benign satisfaction on all created things.

I descended from the carriage at B— in this state of mind; so benign, indeed, that though my portmanteau was nowhere to be found, and it was hinted that possibly it still remained on the Portsmouth platform, I used no bad language, and merely mildly suggested telegraphing at once to town, that it might be forwarded by the next train.

While all the guards and officials were fussing about, I strolled into the waiting-room, which—as the station was intended much more for the use of passengers to —, a town lying a little out of the line of rail, than for the village from which it took his name—was large and well fitted. A few persons were collected there, awaiting the next train, and I soon became an object of attention, from my constant interviews with not only common guards, but the station-master himself, concerning the lost luggage.

Such notoriety was in no wise distressing to my vanity, and I felt rather pleased and soothed by the evident sympathy my situation attracted from a mamma and her three fair daughters. Indeed, I ventured to address a few remarks, under the circumstances, to the old lady; and then one of the fair girls joined in her observations with such naïve

grace, that I was on the point of falling into Dick's weakness, when a tall lady, in a profusion of soft muslin drapery, whether mantle, shawl, dress, or petticoats I don't pretend to say, came and stood on the threshold, and prevented the catastrophe. She stood as if she came merely to have a look at us all, and her eyes travelled round

the room from one to another, not in the least dismayed by the glances, male and female, that met hers in return.

Hers was not a face to be easily forgotten if once remarked; still it was not one among a crowd to draw attention. The expression struck me much more than the colour of the eyes, or shape of the features. There



was a look of impatient suffering on it, a look as if she were labouring under some trouble which galled her perpetually, and which she defied. This expression took away from the youth of the face: it cast a harshness over otherwise soft

features; and it seemed to harmonize with the careless, but not daring boldness with which she stood half-poised on the ledge of the threshold looking round on us all. Still, judging by the dark eyes, and fair, but 'marble' skin, I should have

supposed her an English brunette. I was gazing like everybody else, when some one asked me 'to be good enough to step this way.' Now, to step this way, necessitated my dislodging the fair spectator from her doorway. I approached, politely bowed, muttered a smiling 'Allow me,' my pleasantness was all lost on the lady. She neither smiled, bowed, nor even looked at me, merely crushing her soft muslin garments back, so as to afford me about a foot's space to get through she maintained her position, and never even turned her head. There was nothing absolutely unpleasant in being forced into such close contact with a young, pretty woman, who seemed to exhale a soft sweet fragrance, as naturally as a rose or a violet; but at the same time, I felt annoyed at her rudeness; and it was with anything but grief I heard a slight crunch, as I passed, and feeling an impediment, discovered that the travelling bag I wore slung under my arm, had caught in the muslin, and was carrying off a yard or so of it.

The lady turned.

'A thousand pardons,' I exclaimed, lifting my hat, 'but really—'

'It was my own fault; I should have got out of the way,' she answered quietly; and gathering up the torn dress carelessly on her arm, she did condescend to return my bow, but so unsmilingly and unconcernedly, that in haughty displeasure I hurried off, and probably would never have seen her again, when to my surprise a voice called 'Mr. Owen,' and Cecile came bounding along, her black curls flying in the wind, her hat in her hand instead of on her head, while Brunlo, Dick's favourite retriever, followed barking at her heels.

Such an arrival naturally drew attention. Cecile dashed through the waiting-room, and, before any one could stop her, had followed me to the other side of the railway.

On my return, I held my small companion by the hand, and I was amused to observe the half-disappointed looks of the three fair daughters. I heard one whisper

with a slight elevation of her delicate aquiline, 'Married.'

'Well, Cecile,' I said, in a distinct tone, 'and how is godpapa Gaunt to-day? Can he get up?'

I saw people were listening, and I grew paternal. We had quite a romp in the middle of the station, Cecile, Brunlo, and I. It lasted till the station-master came to me, for the last time, to give me certain assurance that, in an hour's time, my portmanteau should be safely delivered at the White Horse Inn, where Gaunt was staying.

Then I prepared to go, and then I noticed the lady in the doorway had entered the room and was gazing intently at Cecile, then at me, and listening to all we said. Directly she perceived that she had attracted my attention, she moved carelessly away, and returned to the door.

She did not stand in the way of my egress this time, however, and, as I passed her with Cecile at my side, she returned my courteous salutation with one equally courteous, while her dark full eyes glanced up at me with a look too eager to be coquettish, though too free and unembarrassed to be exactly pleasing.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE COTTAGE, THAT WOULDN'T LET, LET AT LAST.

I found Gaunt in a state bordering on melancholy madness.

He had been at H— ever since his departure from London, with Cecile and Brunlo as his only companions, and nearly the whole of that time he had been confined to the sofa by a badly tended sprained ankle. I was not surprised, therefore, knowing my friend's active, unliterary disposition, to find him, under such circumstances, very irritable and raspy in temper, and most heartily warm in his reception of me.

The place, he informed me, was secluded and picturesque, and, he obstinately maintained, highly enjoyable, with both legs in a go-able condition: he told me the angling was excellent, the great attraction,



indeed, of the place, and the cause of his choosing it for his holiday retreat, it being a favourite amusement of his.

I soothingly acquiesced in all his remarks, though I knew they were about as true as his journey to Norfolk; and though still Cecile played in and out of the room all the evening, and insisted upon serving us with coffee with her small busy hands, I accepted her presence as the most natural occurrence in the world, and never even hinted to Dick that he need not load his soul with untruths, for it was impossible to hide from me that Cecile and seclusion were the only attractions that H—— possessed in his eyes.

I made my own survey of the place the next day, and the only agreeable feature in it that I could discover, with the exception of its picturesqueness, was its proximity to——. If driven to extremities, I comforted myself, it would be possible occasionally to seek amusement there from something more lively than trees and streams.

Time did not fly at H——; there was a good deal of sameness in its mornings, noons, and nights; but it was not an unpleasant sameness.

It was not unpleasant to come down day after day to the old-fashioned, oak-panelled room, with its deep windows opening on to a very rustic wooden verandah, up which came roses and jessamine, to breathe their country fragrance over the breakfast-table.

It was not disagreeable either to see the marks of Cecile's childish but still female fingers in the fantastic arrangement of flowers and leaves thereon. And, in spite of the embarrassment and restraint her presence occasionally caused to young men of our age, it was not unpleasant to see her slight figure come bounding in from the garden, as happy as a bird, and almost as swift, and take her place at the head of the breakfast-table, with the grace of an experienced tea-maker.

In the hot noon, the old garden and orchard were shady places to read or lounge, and after one or two attempts, I found it quite possible to

pass three or four hours, fishing-rod in hand, wandering along the banks of the river.

Dick was still very much on the sofa: his sprain had been so badly tended from the commencement, that it required great care, and our invalid gave Cecile and myself abundance of in-door work. Poor Gaunt was very much like a chafed, chained giant: his strength was a burden to him. Even as he rested on the sofa, I hourly expected one of his impatient moves of the healthy leg to bring the machine to pieces.

In his misery, he had called two of the most celebrated surgeons from London, but even they could only prescribe 'Rest.' In vain I read to him, talked to him, reasoned with, and lectured him; he went to sleep over my readings, and railed at my philosophy.

I was on the point of suggesting to his medical attendant the advisability of bleeding him, as the only means of rendering him manageable, when an event occurred which made all our lives more endurable.

As an attempted boundary to the garden of the inn, ran a low, very dilapidated paling, which, however, soon gave up its duty of separation to a deep, swift, but narrow rivulet, that came rushing along, with almost the force of a mountain stream, from under the dark, thick bushes and trees of a neighbouring wood. Where this tiny river took its source had often puzzled me, and more than one idle hour I had given to attempts at finding it out. All I knew positively was, that in various parts of the rather extensive and thick wood around, I had caught sight of its shining, foaming water, now deep down almost lost to view in the ferns, yellow brooms, and dark shrubs that grew so thickly overhanging its narrow bed, now dashing boldly and sparkling in the open sunshine. The wood was too thick and entangled to allow me to trace its course, till it came rushing out, at the end of our orchard, as I said before, to assist the palings to form a boundary, and separate it from the neglected, weedy garden that belonged to the cottage, that wouldn't let, on the other side.

The chalet that wouldn't let, as the neighbouring villa was invariably called, was a small cottage-kind of building, evidently the whim of some person of taste, who, finding afterwards, probably, that to introduce foreign styles of habitation with comfort, it is necessary to introduce foreign climates also, had left the pretty-looking wooden summer-house in disgust.

To my mind, there was nothing very extraordinary in the difficulty of finding a tenant for it: the thin walls, uncarpeted floors, and strictly foreign style of furniture, seemed, even in the August days, so unsuitable to the English scene all around, the English air, and English sunshine, that our landlady's mysterious story of the late tenant dying there quite sudden, and unexplicable like, 'and is said to walk, air,' seemed to me utterly superfluous, to account for its neglected condition.

From our verandah we saw distinctly all over the garden on the other side of the stream, and even into the cottage itself; and with true English unsociability and shyness, we used to congratulate ourselves that such a near neighbour wouldn't let, and that we had no prying eyes to watch our doings.

I was considerably surprised, therefore, one morning, as I was wandering along the banks of the stream, to see the shutters of the cottage all open, and a female figure standing in the verandah, apparently directing the operations of a dark-coloured man, clad in an Indian fashion, wearing a turban on his head, who kept going in and out of the house, with as much bustle as an Eastern can manage to put into his grave, dignified movements.

I stood watching them, with considerable interest; for there was something in the careless, but graceful carriage of the lady, that seemed not utterly strange to me; and I waited to catch a glimpse of her face, to assure myself that she was the same person who, at the railway station, had attracted my attention by her peculiar behaviour.

I waited in vain, however; she stood for a few moments leaning against the verandah, and then sud-

denly with a swift movement entered the house, and I saw her no more. I lingered about the boundary stream all the morning, in hopes of making some further observations, but I was not successful. For about an hour I observed the Indian and an old woman hurry about the place, evidently arranging matters; but the lady was nowhere to be seen; and as the noonday approached, blinds and awnings were drawn down, in true Eastern fashion, bustle and servants disappeared, and perfect quiet reigned in the cottage.

I returned to the house, and in my usual occupations forgot all about our new neighbour, till just before dinner, I happened to go on the verandah, and my morning's curiosity was again recalled, by seeing all the windows and blinds of the cottage thrown wide open, while under the shade of an acacia sat the lady, in a pretty lounging chair with a cushion at her feet, her white muslin dress falling in cool folds down on the freshly-mown lawn, a small table beside her, bearing a coffee cup and a newspaper—the very picture of cool elegance and ease.

The careless, nonchalant attitude—for my lady had extended her limbs in a fashion that suggested much more the idea of luxurious ease than drawing-room decorum—and the soft muslin garments again vividly recalled my railway acquaintance; but in spite of the most studied attention during the whole quarter of an hour I stood on the verandah, I failed in once catching sight of her face. So singularly unsuccessful was I, that I almost fancied she purposely avoided looking my way.

She sat there till the sun set, at least I conclude so; for on my wheeling Gaunt to the verandah after dinner, as usual, I found her still there, in exactly the same attitude; and there she stayed, apparently quite unconscious of our presence overlooking her, till the dusk began to fall. Then, very much after the fashion of a cat rousing itself from slumber, she began to move, to stretch a little, and finally she arose

and began sauntering about the lawn and garden, plucking flowers in an idle manner, and after examining them throwing them heedlessly down. As the twilight grew duskier, and we could only distinguish her movements by the glimmer of her white dress, we noticed she came wandering down in our direction, even to the very brink of the boundary stream, and there for some instants she stood. She probably could hear our voices well, possibly distinguish the words we said.

After maintaining her position for about five minutes, she returned slowly up the garden, entered the well-lighted drawing-room, and soon after we heard a soft but rich voice singing in a style that made us quickly reduce the romance of our new neighbour's ways and doings, to the eccentricity of some Italian Opera star.

Day after day, all this was repeated for more than a week. Apparently utterly careless of our overlookings and watchings, our neighbour pursued the even tenor of her life, only showing her regard of our presence by never once giving us the opportunity of seeing her face, or approaching our precincts till protected by the dusk of evening.

All endeavours at acquaintance, which Gaunt amused himself in making after his usual manner, were not only unsuccessful, but apparently unnoticed.

The rose, that one evening Gaunt threw at her feet, as she stood in the twilight just opposite us, remained where it fell; and in the morning he had the satisfaction of seeing it faded and dead, only marking the spot where she had stood.

In vain we sent Cecile wandering and watching, closer than we dared go, in hopes her childish beauty might attract the lady's friendship. Cecile always came back pouting.

In vain we endeavoured to enter into conversation with the Indian, who occasionally came to purchase provisions at the inn; he replied in the brokenest of English, and in the most unencouraging of tones, to our politest questions. Then Gaunt's

stratagem of commencing an acquaintance by one evening, in the midst of the singing, sending the chambermaid, with the gentlemen at the White Horse Inn's compliments, and they would be extremely obliged if the lady would give them the name of the last song she had sung,—was frustrated by her returning a message to the effect, that she sang from memory, and could not oblige us.

The lady, whoever she was, seemed quite determined not to make our acquaintance. Of course this piqued us; and just as much as she drew back, we became more anxious and decided in our advances.

I believe most men, after they have once got over the effervescence of their teens, and early ties, require a little pricking to stimulate them to the exertion of love-making.

A little judicious mystery, just enough to stir without fatiguing the curiosity, or a little repulsion, obstinate enough to pique, but not wound the vanity, are weapons, of which, in the delicate handling of a pretty woman, she herself scarcely knows the force.

The child of nature, pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw, is decidedly the father of the civilized man.

I don't know whether our rather eccentric neighbour had studied human nature. As I consider now, at some distance of time, how events unfolded themselves, I more than think she had; and I can now fancy how that peculiar face of hers must have wreathed itself in triumphant smiles, as, behind the venetian blind, she, in her turn, watched our constant watchings; how that impatient nature of hers must have wrestled with the cool reason that forced her to wait, and bide her time.

That solitary life behind closed shutters; that wearying romance of her twilight walks; how she must have chafed under it!

Had I had my usual occupations, most probably I should have troubled myself very little with my neighbour, or her doings. Even had Gaunt been in his usual health, it

would have been different; we should have contrived to find some amusement for our long idle summer days; but as it was, not liking to leave the very impatient sufferer by himself, I was forced to remain lingering about the house and garden; and naturally the doings of our only neighbour assumed an additional piquancy.

When I was out on an occasional expedition, I used to leave Gaunt in

the verandah; and naturally he watched and reported to me, on my return, anything that might have occurred. If I went lounging about, fishing in the boundary stream, I, in my turn, played spy; Cecile, too, assisted us. Indeed we vied with each other in collecting information; and it was quite a race between Dick and I, as to who should first catch sight of that carefully turned-away face.

## THE BLACK SHEPHERD.

A St. Valentine Extrabaganya.

IN Fairy land, where happy love is voted quite the thing,  
And joyous spirits frisk and whisk and whistle in a ring,  
King Oberon flew home one night, not needing a latch-key,  
And found Titania sitting up, and sucking a split-pea.

With sundry little swaggering flights, and tiny, saucy skips,  
He pounced upon her like a bee, and settled on her lips.  
'O darling pet!' Titania cried—a kiss with every breath—  
'These dreadful Brownies of the Hill, I vow they'll be my death!

'Last April—when in Taurus, sweet! the sun was making signs,  
When every bird looked like a goose,—that bird that *never* shines—  
They seized a gay court page,—his coat of bachelor's-buttons full,—  
They pinched his side and made him ride upon an Irish bull.

'My wings! a sorry jest was *that*. But, oh, my sweetest flower!  
What do you think they've been and done this very, *very* hour?  
They've caught a poor black shepherd, pet! as woolly as a bear,  
And with a red cock's currycomb they want to comb his hair!

On each sheep's pretty trotter, pop! they want to tie a clog!  
They even say the shepherd's dog is *not* a shepherd's dog!  
But when the lambs in frolic mood go scouring down the vale  
Sits looking in his master's face, and only wags his tail!

'They say the shepherd black *will* sing, when sheep he ought to chase;  
They call his hair a bag of soot left in a sooty place.  
I saw him with these own, *own* eyes, lit by a glow-worm spark:  
His wool *was* wool, but then his face was not so *very* dark.

'The white lambs, young and innocent, about him frisked and played,  
The black sheep came and licked his hand, and did *not* seem afraid.  
As for that naughty pugsey-pop! that scurries at his heels,  
True, he sometimes barks at cripples—but we know not what he *feels*.

'I wish those eyes could see the shepherd dumbling of *their* choice:  
Poor lambs! for him they'd never know love ever *had* a voice.  
A lump of salt to smack their lips he carries in a bag,  
With a crusty cur to snarl and drive, with not a tail to wag!



Drawn by M. Ellen Edwards.]

A LEGEND OF SAINT VALENTINE.

— 9 — [See the Poem.

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the verandah; and naturally he watched and reported to me, on my return, anything that might have occurred. If I went lounging about, fishing in the boundary stream, I, in my turn, played spy; Cecilia, too, assisted us. Indeed we vied with each other in collecting information; and it was quite a race between Dick and I, as to who should first catch sight of that carefully turned-away face.

## THE BLACK SHEPHERD.

A. St. Valentine Extrabagaja.

IN Fairy land, where happy love is voted quite the thing,  
And joyous spirits frolic and whistle in a ring,  
King Oberon flows down one night, and twiddling a fitch-key,  
And Quack I heard sitting up with aching eyelids—

With slender, dark-shagging fingers, and tiny, sunny smiles,  
He pressed upon the lips a kiss, and settled on her lips.  
‘O darling! you are mine!’—he said with every breath—  
‘These dreadful beauties of the Red, I vow they’ll be my death!’

‘Fast April—when in Tournai, sweet! the sun was making signs,  
When every bird looked like a goose,—that bird that *never* shines—  
They seized a gay court page,—his coat of bachelor’s-buttons full,—  
They pinched his side and made him ride upon an Irish bull.

‘My wings! a sorry jest was *that*. But, oh, my sweetest flower!  
What do you think they’ve been and done this very, *new* hour?  
They’ve caught a poor black shepherd, pet! as woolly as a bear,  
And with a red cock’s currycomb they want to comb his hair!’

‘On each sheep’s pretty trotter, pop! they want to tie a dog!  
They even say the shepherd’s dog is not a shepherd’s dog!  
Now when the lambs in frolic mood go scouring down the vale  
His looking in his master’s face, and only wags his tail!’

‘They say the shepherd black *will* sing, when sheep he ought to chase;  
They say his hair a tag of soot left in a sooty place.  
I saw him with these own, *own* eyes, lit by a glow-worm spark:  
His wool was black, but then his face was not so *very* dark.

‘The white-lashed, young and innocent, about him frisked and played,  
The black sheep came and tickled his hand, and did not seem afraid.  
As for that naughty *jaudy*-pop! that scurries at his heels,  
True, he sometimes looks at cripples—but we know not what he *feels*.

‘I wish those eyes could see the shepherd duns of *their* choice:  
Poor lambs! for him they’d never know love ever *and* a voice.  
A lump of salt to smother their lips he carries in a bag,  
With a crusty cur to snarl and drive, with not a tail to wag!’





Drawn by M. Ellen Edwards.]

A LEGEND OF SAINT VALENTINE.

[See the Poem.

Each of the three cases had a different history. The first was a 45-year-old male with a long history of alcoholism and a recent diagnosis of liver disease. The second was a 35-year-old female with a long history of alcoholism and a recent diagnosis of liver disease. The third was a 25-year-old male with a long history of alcoholism and a recent diagnosis of liver disease.

And, indeed, it is that great miracle, not merely that we can

And when I know the meaning of it, what shall you be doing?

' Now, what say you, my darling Obe?—For me, *I* think, myself,  
Such goings on this time of year enough to stun an elf!—  
Will rivers fill with stocks and stones,—will this green earth grow gray,  
Because a man goes pastoring in a beneficial way?

' Dear goodness gracious, Oberon! my little *snug* goodman,  
Do help your cosy fairy wife as only fairy can:  
Don't linger here, sweet! kissing me, but out to meet the sun;  
We'll drive the mice, and in a trice we'll see what can be done.

' In spite of Browny's stupid "poohs," and "tushes," "pshawes," and "pishes,"  
Just now, you know, love, when the sun goes waltzing with the fishes,  
The dear black saint *shall* sing all day to tunes the old sheep bellow—  
But here comes Puck, my love of loves, my darling, sweet good-fellow!

The last kiss scarce had left her lips when up rode plucky Puck,  
His wings in senna-bladders cased, and mounted on a duck;  
The maddest, merriest urchin wag, the queerest, *quicrest* sprite  
That ever froze with puckered nose upon a wild March night.

His rein a filmy gossamer, an up-curved leaf his saddle;  
A wispy reed-whip in his hand, his punchy legs astraddle.  
His eyes were brimmed with fun, his heart was laughing at the core:  
Such a whibby whobby hobby-horse he never rode before!

' You sweet fat chick!' Titania cried, 'you prince of little swells!  
How ever *do* you tuck your toes among the bobbing bells?  
Quick! tell me, Puck, what mischief's ripe, and where the Brownies go,  
With beetle brows and hearts of stone, like nutmegs in a row?

' Dressed in *such* frights of garments, Tit, such suits of precious drab  
As tint an old toad's mottled stool, or vein a mushroom slab;  
Each with a cone-cap on his head, and looking like a fool—  
Each with a burry teasel tall to tease the shepherd's wool.

' I roared at them, I whipped at them, I rode at them a-tilt,  
Till out of all their firry caps the dainty dew was spilt;  
Into their midst in furious rage my duck of ponies flew,  
And dashed at all their teasel-stalks, and snapped them each in two.

' Away they skirled! of martial Puck the warlike measures rueing;  
And when I found the shepherd black, what think you he was doing?  
Lest laughter wild should split your sides, your mouth with rose-leaves fill—  
He was scrawling on a *sheepskin*, Tit, and writing with a—*quill*!

' Chanting, and shedding round such tears as laughing mortals weep,  
He felt the brush of fairy wings, and, tickled, fell asleep.  
From off his knees, like some sharp breeze, I whiffed this saucy scroll,  
This scriilly-scrawl, signed "*Valentine*," this precious rigmorole!

' Such *lines* were never quilled before, such *words* I never seed  
Since from a dry papyrus skin old Sap taught me to read.  
So, father Obe and mother Tit, your ears and patience lend;  
With fingers on your lips, cry "*mum*," and hear me to the end.

### The Scroll.

"I was once a selfish bachelor, shaved in a lonely cell:  
They came and made me bishop—why, the saints alone can tell!  
I drank too much of Malmsey wine—it is the old, old story,  
And fell upon a pumpkin pie in the re-fec-tory-ory.

"The sly lay-brothers winked their eyes, aghast the abbots stood,  
To find so much of mischief lurk beneath a grave monk's-hood.  
They took my pie—and ate it! ay, and drained my flowing bowl;  
They said they found me wanting, and then hiccoughed—'a lost soul!'

"The saintesses on every groin sat grinning their alarms,  
And all the little cherub-faces they were up in arms.  
They fla-ge-la-ted me enough to make a sinner weep;  
The Pope, too, came—forgot my name—and called me a *black-sheep!*

"Now only think what frightful things live, real popes can do!  
No sooner had he touched my poll, and looked me through and through,  
Than all my red blood turned to black—black as a midnight pool,  
Where'er I looked I cast sheep's eyes,—and all my hair was wool!

"Now all you moody anchorites take warning, *do*, by me,  
And barter not the wine of youth for a butt of old Malmsey,  
Lest all life's promised honeycombs should prove but empty cells,  
And maids forlorn prim-roses turn, or noisy deep blue-bells.

"And *you*—you little shuttlecocks! that from *our* hearts rebound  
With hearts as light as cork, and with fine feathers stuck all round,  
Such pufferies to puff-balls leave, and never, never more  
Go fighting 'gainst the wind, nor make our breasts your battledore!

"I long to see you wave and float as fairies still are seen,  
Whose only circle round them is the circle on the green;  
Not roll,—as if kind Nature's hand had sent a cask of wine  
To sport and dance on wooden shoes along a railway line!

"They never pinch their shepherd's-purse, while whispering 'pet' and 'dear;'  
They never ask—they never *want*—ten thousand pounds a year.  
And now"—dear Titty, you may laugh, but I *will* read it through—  
"I wish you all such loving lords,—such *ducks* of children too!"

ELEANORA L. HERVEY.



## POLITENESS, INSULAR AND CONTINENTAL.

## Dinnering.

'One thing is certain, namely, that a dinner-party is the main institution of society in this country, and one which every class and every denomination recognizes and permits. Many people denounce balls as wicked, and consider evening parties frivolous; but none see any harm in being well fed and made to drink a certain or uncertain quantity of wine.' *The Habits of Good Society*, p. 301.

THAT tocsin of the soul, the dinner-bell, gives the signal for a multitude of observances, of which I will select a few variations as the best way of illustrating rules. Our readers may fairly be supposed acquainted with the subject, even if they have not read the book, which affords a motto for the present paper.

Everywhere the preliminaries of dining differ but slightly from our own.

Except on state or official occasions, or with slight acquaintances and superiors, dinner invitations are often given, abroad as well as at home, by word of mouth, at a friendly call or a casual meeting. 'Will you favour me with the pleasure of your company to dinner on such a day?' Your friend's dinner hour is probably known to you. There is the same ill-breeding in coming late, the same want of tact and inconvenience in arriving too early. You are bound to answer every written invitation immediately; any delay in doing so causes your acceptance to be implied. It is bad taste to require pressing to accept a verbal invitation to dinner. Sensible people either accept at once frankly, or regret that they cannot, stating the reason why.

Owing, perhaps, to military habits, foreign dinners are, I think, more punctual than English ones; and the higher the grade of society, the greater the punctuality. Many first-rate continental *tables d'hôte* are punctual to a minute. Instantly after the last stroke of the church clock, the dinner-bell rings. The cook makes his arrangements accordingly. In general, it is better that you should have to wait ten minutes for the dinner than that the dinner should wait five for you. Want of punctuality at a rendez-vous-dinner, at a pic-nic, hotel, or

restaurant, is nowhere other than culpability which merits repression by reprimand.

When the servant announces that dinner is served, the lady of the house takes the arm of the gentleman of highest rank or position, often designating certain ladies to be conducted by certain gentlemen, and all proceed to the dining-room, where places are taken 'with a difference.' In France, instead of our hostess at top and our host at bottom, the lady takes the middle of the table, while her husband sits opposite. On *her* right is placed first gentleman, on *her* left, second gentleman; on *his* right, first lady, on *his* left, second lady. The places of the respective guests are often indicated by cards. Several German courts dine at round tables, which are extremely sociable when the party is not large, and are paternal and familiar when there is any considerable interval of rank between the persons who dine together. An oval table has its advantages.

I have seen, and do not like to see, the soup plates standing ready filled when you enter the dining-room. The object is to enable everyone to start fair, and begin dinner at the same moment. If the guests were famishing, it would be a benevolent precaution; but for people not actually dying of hunger, it too strongly suggests a dinner doled out to paupers or prisoners. Moreover, it deprives the hostess of the opportunity of serving soup herself to each guest, in the order of their rank or age, by way of welcome. At dinners where the carving is done at side-tables, and the viands sent round, the lord or lady should distribute at least some one dish with their own hands (Talleyrand's constant practice), as a graceful proof of their hospitable intentions,

and to save their dinner from bearing too great a resemblance to a *table d'hôte*.

It used to be high caste in England to eat with a spoon everything that could be so eaten, except fish, which was not made spoon-meat. Peas, pudding, curry, custard, were all conveyed to the mouth with a spoon. The same of serving. A lady, whose social position was dubious, caused opinion to pronounce that she *was* a lady by helping lemon-pudding with a spoon. Now-a-days, whether fork or spoon, or fork and spoon, you may do as you like, provided you do it without affectation. Nowhere may you eat anything with a knife.

It is not polite to express surprise, repugnance, or ridicule at the introduction and consumption of any eatable which may be new or unusual to your own experience. The world is wide, and you have not yet seen the whole of it. If invited to experimental repasts, such as the Prince Napoleon's Chinese dinners, or the recent French and German horseflesh banquets, you know what you have to expect beforehand, and can accept or decline accordingly. But if fortune unexpectedly bring you into contact with strange messes which others enjoy, good manners require you to *look* as if you could enjoy them if you pleased. I have seen people almost shout, in Germany, at beholding stewed prunes and fish come on in the middle of dinner. In a foreign seaport I have had a circle of rustics, raw from the interior, gather round me, to watch the wonderful feat of oyster-eating; but I soon put the savages to flight by insisting on their tasting them. I have been at tables where dog-fish (such as in England is used only for manure, unless to make cod-liver oil) was served, and relished, being said to be preferable to skate. I have sat next ladies who feasted on snails, and who would have been justly offended had my manner shown the little sympathy I felt for their taste. One man's poison is another man's meat. There is scarcely a nation which does not eat something which another nation re-

pudiates as food; witness our consumption of beef, veal, and pork, not to mention eels. During the famine, the Irish would as soon starve as eat Indian corn, while Cobbett, had he been still surviving, would have treated potatoes with similar repugnance.

'Is it quack-quack-quack?' an Englishman, who was enjoying what he took for hashed duck, asked of his neighbour, a Chinaman.

'No, no; it is much better. It is bow-wow-wow,' replied the yellow Oriental.

At a *table d'hôte* at a Pyrenean 'waters,' a mess of rice-milk was offered. It was nicely served in a raised dish, and its surface slightly browned with a salamander. It was a proper dish to present to a party, a certain portion of whom were invalids restricted to a simple diet. A young Frenchman, in robust health, took rice-milk; but instead of eating, he smeared his plate with it, playing with his spoon, and showing other outward tokens of dislike. His lady mother, by his side, laughed heartily at her son's grimaces, and at his adolescent contempt for what had been the sustenance of his childhood.

'Tchut! tchut!' said the head waiter across the table, with a look which showed his sense of their indecorous conduct. Madame and young monsieur were instantly quiet, reserving their mirth for their private moments.

To stare hard at people while eating (or at any other time) is not polite. The French remedy for staring in the streets is good. If you regard a gentleman longer or more closely than politeness warrants, he takes off his hat to you. An Englishman would roughly remark, 'I hope, sir, you'll know me again!'

It could not have been pleasant for the court of France to eat their public breakfasts, in which poor Louis XVI's dexterity in knocking off the top of his egg was a standing point of admiration for the crowd in the gallery. In Algeria, it is the height of rudeness to watch or remark on people while eating, and would give rise to sharp rebuffs.



'To see how you tear and swallow that mutton,' said an Arab, 'one would suppose that the sheep, during his lifetime, had butted your stomach [with his horns.]'

'To see how slowly and lazily you chew it, one would say that his mother had been your wet-nurse,' was the angry reply.

During Lord Macartney's embassy to China, the mandarins and their followers took a fancy to enter the dinner-hall and remain standing there all dinner-time, to observe how Europeans ate. Occasionally their curiosity got the better of their courtesy. One day a Chinaman, in his anxiety to see the whole operation, peered open-mouthed over the shoulder of a member of the embassy, and looked down into his plate. The Englishman could stand it no longer. Indiscreetly taking up a morsel with his fork, he thrust it into the Chinaman's mouth. The high-bred celestials took it as an affront. Every Mantchoo-Tartar instantly left the room, and never more returned to see the barbarians feed. This incident was *not* the cause of the embassy's failure, but it certainly could do no good.

It is not polite, in a private house, to breathe in your glass and polish it with your napkin, or to wipe your plate, knife, fork, or spoon, or, in short, to do anything which can imply a suspicion of the neatness and cleanliness of the service. In hotels and restaurants only you have the right, by paying for it, to take those precautions.

General Grosdos, who retained many of his army habits, was dining at a minister's house in Paris. When a livery servant came to fill his glass with wine, he anticipated the movement by wiping it with all his might and main. The hostess, fearing that some little accident had occurred, signed to the valet behind her to change the glass. The wiping process was recommenced, and the glass immediately changed, up to a third, and a fourth, until the general, losing temper, whispered to his neighbour, a senator's wife, 'Does M. le Ministre mean to make game of me, by asking me to dinner to wipe his glasses?'

The lady, with some difficulty, got him to understand that what might be necessary in a camp kitchen was quite unnecessary in a Parisian dining-room.

Touching napkins, *Awyer* says, 'It is a matter of regret that table-napkins are not considered indispensable in England; for, with all our boasted refinement, they are far from being general. The comfort of napkins at dinner is too obvious to require comment, whilst the *expense* can hardly be urged as an objection. If there be not any napkins, a man has no alternative but to use the table-cloth, unless (*as many do*) he prefer his pocket-handkerchief—an usage sufficiently disagreeable.'

In France, in the most modest establishment, a table laid without a napkin for each person would be considered as incomplete as a bed without sheets. It ought to be so in England. 'The Habits' very properly takes napkins as things for granted, about whose presence there is no question. The mode only of presenting them is open to discussion. 'The napkins may be folded according to fancy. Sometimes they are placed on the plate with a roll of bread inside, and sometimes arranged in a fan-shape in the champagne-glasses. For my own part, I prefer to think that no hands have been soiling mine before I use it, and perhaps the most elegant way is to lay them on the table or plate just as they come from the washerwoman's.

Napkins have their etiquette. They are to be laid open on the knees, and *not* fastened to the waistcoat or button-hole. At the close of a meal, at home, you may fold your napkin and slip it into its ring, to serve for another occasion. Out, you must leave your napkin, wiped up or exactly as you have finished with it, on the table. To fold it, would look as if you considered yourself one of the family, or at least on a staying visit.

A guest, at the close of a breakfast to which he had been invited, carefully folded his napkin and laid it beside his plate.

By way of rebuke his hostess re-

marked, 'I am delighted to have had your company to breakfast; but I don't remember, sir, having asked you to dinner.'

The lady was wrong, I venture to think—unkindly and unjustly sharp to her visitor. Neatness and order are minor virtues, even when applied to soiled linen. If I like to see even things sent to the wash neatly folded, there is no harm in it, but the contrary; seeing that, so, they are more easily counted and occupy less space.

In morals, we are told that one man may steal a horse whilst another may not look over a hedge. It is the same in manners. Not only to one person are permitted eccentricities which would cause the exclusion of another, but in some societies habits are 'the thing' which elsewhere would cause a start of horror. Amongst the Arabs (so severe and exacting on many points of etiquette) it is not unpolite, but rather a compliment to your entertainer, at the close of a dinner to indulge in an action which may be written but may scarcely be pronounced; for although Shakespeare has a Sir Toby Belch, we are nicer now than in Shakespeare's days. I remember a pork-butcher who made a great reputation by his 'anti-eructative sausages.' An Arab, if he ate sausages, which he does not, would ask for the eructative sort. The same mode of relief was formerly allowable in old Spanish society, who doubtless derived the fashion from their Moorish masters.

Even more serious accidents are considered by the Arabs merely as marks of prosperity and proofs of a sharp appetite copiously satisfied. The culprit coolly says, 'I thank Allah—' complete the ellipsis with, 'for having given me wherewithal to fill my stomach.' To which his neighbours reply with equal coolness, 'May Allah preserve your health!'

At dessert, a coloured finger-glass to each guest, purple, green, pink, or blue—by alternating colours you get a pleasing effect on the white cloth—is a good old custom. There is nothing indelicate in its proper

use; and it is really useful. However neatly a person may eat, sugary sweets and juicy fruits will leave a trace on the finger-tips, not to mention asparagus if handled when eaten, which is permitted, if not pretty. Shrimps and shell-fish, which also are allowed to come in contact with the finger and thumb, betray the presence of saline elements. Now, it is uncomfortable, to say the least, for a young lady to draw on white gloves, or sit down to the piano, with clammy fingers. A finger-glass remedies the inconvenience. The hand may be dipped, the napkin slightly wetted and applied to the lips, and that is all, according to my code.

A refinement is to supply the finger-glasses with warm water mixed with eau de Cologne. The legend of the invention is this. Two friends strove, for a wager, which should give the more elegant dinner. The elegance of the dinners was so equal that the judges, puzzled, were near pronouncing for a drawn bet, when eau de Cologne in the finger-glasses, at the second dinner, decidedly turned the scale in its favour.

In France, water of mint is sometimes substituted for water of Cologne; which is no improvement, since it is not everybody who likes the scent. There is also another addition which I must specify, to condemn it. In the midst of the finger-glass stands a smaller glass, containing water to rinse the mouth. You *may* do it, because other people do it; only don't if you ask me to dine. That you should not do it, may be proved syllogistically, thus:

In company, nobody ought to do anything which can offend any member of that company. But to many people mouth-rinsing is an offensive operation. Ergo, mouth-rinsing is not an operation to be performed in company.

And yet people socially rinse their mouths who open their eyes, and are shocked, if you touch fish with a knife, cool your coffee in a saucer, eat your soup at the side of your spoon (French), or divide your bread otherwise than with your fingers! Amongst the Arabs, however, *not* to rinse the mouth is a

mark of ill-breeding. The rustic custom of pressing guests to eat more than they want, is almost an equal breach of refinement, which is not confined to any one country.

'Have some more, John. Now do,' said hospitable Bill.

'I can't, Bill. I've eaten till I'm fit to bust.'

'Na, na, na; you'll niver bust with that. I wish I'd something to bust you with!'

Alphonse Karr, novelist and gardener by trade, in his '*Le Chemin le plus court*,' describes a feast of the kind given by a country dame, Madame Leloup (The Wolf), who is a satirical portrait of his own dear mother-in-law. It is an excellent lesson on what to avoid.

'She bought up every eatable in the town, borrowed servants and plate, invited none but the most *comme il faut* people, and quarrelled with all her friends whom she did not invite. This dinner, which she called *sans cérémonie*, obliged her to sell a piece of pasture-land. Her dress was a droll assemblage of all the colours of the prism and several others besides. Her ten fingers were adorned with five-and-thirty rings. She never ceased begging her guests to excuse the plainness of her poor repast; but with friends there was no need to put oneself out. Sixty pounds of meat were set before ten people. She addressed only her titled guests, affecting for the others a disdain which she believed excessively *distingué*. She was pitiless in urging those *dear friends* to eat, loading their plates in spite of all resistance, till at last they feared she intended making them swallow the whole of the horrible quantity of food which she had heaped together. She burnt perfumes, whose odour mixed with the smell of the sauces. She called, rebuked, and scolded the servants. She panted and perspired. Her skin, completely scarlet, could scarcely contain her. She looked like an apoplectic cockchafer.'

To improve which text, I here insist on the rule never to apologise for what you set before your friends. If it is bad taste for a host to praise the dinner on his table, it is still

more inconsistent and ridiculous for him to make excuses for it. It is taken for granted, as a matter of course, that you give the very best at your command and within your means.

When a long-besieged general invites his staff to dinner, he makes no excuse for entertaining them with roast horse, rat pie, and cat ragout; nor does he apologise for the poverty of his dessert and the paucity of his stock of claret. He and his guests take what there is, and are thankful, without remark. If it were a meal of bread and water, good sense and good manners would require them to do the same.

At most, you may explain the reason of any omission or short coming, as, 'I know you like fish, but there was none to be had. The weather has been so rough that the boats could not go out.' If you replace the missing fish with something equivalent, you have done your duty as a host. To say that *you are sorry* that you have no fruit, is tantamount to saying either that you are sorry that it is early spring, or that you are sorry that grapes are a guinea a pound, and that you are sorry that you do not choose to give that price. All which are sillinesses best left unsaid. And which of the two is the stupider practice?—for persons of limited means to apologise for not giving expensive dainties (the first-come salmon, forced fruit and vegetables, far-fetched game), or to show their improvidence by giving them? Whatever you give, one item is indispensable, and will be the most highly relished of all. Treat every one of your guests to a *plat de bonne mine*—to looks of welcome. If you have admitted a bricklayer to your table, you are bound to treat him exactly like your other guests, except giving him the place of honour.

While taking care to have sufficient, let there be abundance without profusion. Never put too much upon the table. The error is much easier to avoid now than it was thirty years ago. The merit of moderation, then, was a distinguished mark of good taste and discernment.

English dinners are passing through a revolutionary phase, which is not even yet quite complete. The leader of the movement, probably, was Walker, in his 'Original,' which every one who likes sensible dining ought to read and ruminate. In olden time (see the cookery books with dinners for every month, and even every day of the year) a table, at each course, had to be covered 'with a set number of dishes, as precisely fixed and as numerous as the pieces on a chess-board. They served for ornament rather than for use, as it was impossible to taste one-third of them hot; and the leavings of a dinner-party were awfully hard work for a family to get through with. It was as bad as killing a calf in the house. The modern fashions of substituting the white table-cloth for the brown mahogany at dessert, of decorating the table with that dessert and with flowers from the beginning, and of carving joints at side tables and handing the dishes round, relieve the dinner-giver of all temptation to make ostentatious displays of masses of meat.

Again, as excess in quantity of the united meal is coarse and vulgar, so scantiness in the supply of any one particular dish is not mean (for it is sometimes unavoidable), but simply absurd. A dish should never have *le goût de trop peu*, the taste of too little. If you cannot produce enough green peas, asparagus, or early strawberries for each person who sees them to have a fair portion, suppress them altogether. Remember Thackeray's sketch in Punch: 'Will you take a little game, my dear?' A lady and gentleman are entertaining. A servant lifts an immense silver cover from a vast silver dish, on which reposes—a roasted lark!

Apropos of plate. A *plated* dinner service has the double advantage of not breaking and of not exciting envy and covetousness, like the golden dishes of royalty. Once, when Louis XIV. was giving a state dinner to the royal family, the courtiers crowded round the table to witness the grace with which his Majesty picked the leg of a

pheasant. Amongst them Arlequin Dominique, the famous actor, could not take his eyes off a brace of partridges which lay upon a golden dish. The King observing it, said, 'Give that dish to Dominique.' 'Really, sire! and the partridges too?' replied the ready Arlequin. His Majesty, stupefied, hesitated an instant, and then, laughing at the fellow's impudence, added, 'Yes, and the partridges too.'

Everybody wishes to give good dinners. Large dinners puzzle the givers, because they have not considered the theory of dining, which theory our dining-room reforms enable us to put in practice. The old system was as if a party of twenty were an individual ogre possessing a more than twenty-man appetite. But a dinner-party is not an individual; it is an assembly of individuals, a combination of units. Take, therefore, a good dinner for one, multiply it by twenty, and you have a good dinner for twenty. One man cannot partake of fifty dishes, neither, therefore, can twenty men partake of fifty dishes. Only, in providing for a party, you may have a few more dishes than in providing for one person, to allow for the difference of tastes. If the tastes of the guests were alike and accordant, not a single extra dish would be required.

What, then, is a good dinner for one? Let us take the standard universally acknowledged as sufficient in Paris. You may test it any day at such convenient places as the Diner de Paris, Passage Jouffroy, nearly opposite to the Théâtre des Variétés, or at the Hôtel de France et d'Angleterre, Rue des Filles St. Thomas, leading out of the Place de la Bourse.

Each person is supposed to require a plate of soup; a *hors d'œuvre* or two (*i. e.*, a bit of butter, an anchovy, or a radish, a plaything, in short, to pass the time and fill up crevices); three dishes,—but, in Paris, fish counts as a dish, and vegetables (cauliflowers, peas, or asparagus, for instance) are a dish; an ice, a *beignet* (fritter), an omelette soufflée, or other kickshaw; a trifle of dessert; and a glass of liqueur.

Wine, at discretion, is of course taken with the meal.

Now to apply these principles to a dinner party. First, every guest will have a bill of fare beside his plate, that he may make his selection. There may be two or three kinds of soup, suited to the season, to choose from, as *julienne* or *tapioca* in summer, *ox-tail*, *mock* or *real turtle* in cold weather. The *hors d'œuvres* will be disposed up and down the table, adding to its ornamentation, and inviting a trial. Two or three kinds of fish, with their appropriate sauces, will suffice, respecting which 'The Habits' sensibly remarks: 'If there were no other advantage in the Russian system, as it is called, it would be worth adopting only because it enables the dinner-giver to offer more variety instead of forcing him to sacrifice taste to the appearance of his dishes. Thus *turbot* and *cod* were once standing dishes at all English dinners, and small fish were banished because they did not put on a majestic appearance. There are many ways of dressing fish which may not be so agreeable to the eye as to the palate. How exquisite is the flavour of some fresh-water fish, and of several kinds of shell-fish, which we so seldom see at great dinners! How much better the variety of *trout*, *perch*, *fried gudgeons*, even *eels*, *mussels*, and *lampreys*, than that perpetual *turbot*!' It is the height of orthodoxy in France to commence a *déjeuner* or a dinner with *oysters*, which are eaten *before* the soup.

Remembering that a private entertainment may be more liberally supplied than a fixed-price restaurant dinner can be, there may be four or five kinds of flesh dishes, quite moderate-sized joints, whether of *beef*, *veal*, *mutton*, *lamb*, *poultry*, or *game*, each with a fitting accompaniment of vegetable (as we eat vegetables with our meat), and some served white and some brown. Then a choice of two or three sweets, intended for the ladies rather than the gentlemen; and then, the standing and fixed dessert. Of course, a servant is ready with salad, for those who choose to eat it with the roast.

*Celery* will be a *hors d'œuvre* to go with the cheese; which may be taken either English fashion, between dinner and dessert, or, under bell-glasses, may form part of the dessert itself, as is the custom in France. The wines depend on mine host's generosity and judicious selection.

No one can call such a dinner either extravagant or a bad one, if well cooked and well served. It may be varied greatly, without increasing either its cost or its cumbersome. Its scale is enough, and not too much, and its remains will not tax the family digestive powers. Good waiting is of the utmost necessity.

A writer in 'The Times' would introduce a similar principle of simplification to those magnificent messes, the Lord Mayor's dinners, which, he says, are really very bad, not creditable to the wealth of the City, and not gratifying to the majority of the visitors who eat them. He once had to dine off green peas only, although tempted with a long list of things which it was impossible to obtain. The Lord Mayor's guests would be in the same predicament as Napoleon I's—obliged to eat a hearty dinner before going out to dine, through want of victuals in one case, as through want of time in the other; for the Emperor, on state occasions, remained at table thirty minutes, neither more nor less; at ordinary dinners, fifteen minutes only.

The correspondent of 'The Times' advised the City Committee for Lord Mayor's day to imitate the public dinners given at the *Hôtel de Ville* of Paris. Let them provide a complete dinner for a party of eight; namely, the turtle and another soup, the *turbot* and another fish, two *entrées*, the venison and roast beef, the sweets and the ices. Let them avoid the riot and uncertainty of a hundred other dishes named in a *menu*, and stick to these, and then multiply the fixed dishes by the parties of eight invited. Instead of placing before every one a bottle of burning sherry and handing round only disturbing champagne, let them select a glass of appropriate



wine to go with each dish. Let them insist that each set of waiters attend only to their own party of eight, and not wander off to distant common councilmen with the prime cuts of turbot and venison. By following this simple method, they may inaugurate an epoch of reform in civic dinners, which is extremely needed.

As to the number of diners required to make a pleasant private dinner, there is a golden rule that they should not be more in number than the Muses, nor fewer than the Graces. Nevertheless, under certain circumstances, a *l'été-à-l'été* dinner may be exceedingly pleasant; as two brothers, cousins, or intimate friends, after a long separation; a young couple in their honeymoon; and other cases needless to specify. But such is hardly social dining. In many people's opinion, the most agreeable dinners are those composed of six or eight well-assorted persons. But that limit cannot always be observed. There are sundry strong reasons which compel it frequently to be exceeded.

If, however, you are obliged at any time to go beyond twelve in making your invitations, let me urge you to raise your figure to twenty at once, or, better, to a couple of dozen. With from fourteen to sixteen expected guests, you are never sure of not being left in the lurch at the last moment, and being reduced to an ominous thirteen. The superstition is not insular, but common to Christendom. There is, if possible, a stronger objection, abroad, to sitting down thirteen to table, than there is even at home. Alphonse Karr has constructed one of his ingenious stories, 'Pour ne pas être Treize,' 'To avoid being Thirteen,' on the accident of a lad and a girl having to dine together at a separate little table in a corner (and on the consequences of the attachment which thence ensued), in order to leave their elders eleven.

The Reverend George Green, Chaplain to the British Embassy in the city of Weissnichtwo, was seated at dinner with his lady opposite. It was the first anniversary of their wedding day. Baby, exactly two

months old, was sleeping upstairs in the nursery. The soup was removed. Although fish is rare at that inland spot, a piece of lake trout had graced the table, and disappeared. A saddle of mountain mutton had followed it, and a smoking slice lay on each of the happy spouse's plates, when a ring at the door, singularly impatient for that quietest of capitals, startled them. Thirty seconds afterwards, the servant announced 'Sir John Treacastle.'

'Excuse this interruption, my dear madam; but business of the greatest importance brings me here. Does your servant understand English?'

'Perfectly. Ludwig, go and tell the cook to keep the rest of the dinner hot till we ring for it. Take a chair, Sir John, and do as we do, or at least accept a glass of wine. It will do you good; for you seem fatigued.'

'And well I may! I am half distracted. I have no time to drink wine or anything else. But don't eat that mutton, Green; there's a good fellow. It's a capital saddle, but I have a haunch of venison at home.'

Green and his wife exchanged glances, inquiring, 'Has our sedate representative got a bee in his bonnet?'

'I am quite at your mercy,' the intruder continued. 'There is no opportunity for diplomacy here. I am driven into a corner; on my last legs. I must have what I require. If you, my dear madam, refuse the favour I am about to ask, I must submit to the disgrace of a complete break down.'

'What can I do to serve you, Sir John?' asked the lady, beginning to fear that something serious had occurred. 'What is it that you require so urgently?'

'Your husband, dear madam, and that instantly, this very minute. Listen, while I explain the mystery. You may have heard that we are now giving our first series, this season, of diplomatic dinners?'

Mrs. Green bowed a grave assent. 'Your names are down for the second series. What a pity we did not invite you for the first,—for to-



day! It would have been more just to your birth [Mrs. G. was of very good family], as well as to your husband's official position; and we should not have been in our present difficulty.'

The lady could not help wickedly smiling.

'To-day's dinner is mainly in honour of the Comte de C—. You know, my dear fellow, the immense importance of a good understanding in that quarter. Our relations have hitherto been most smooth and cordial; and now comes this untoward event to put everything at sixes and sevens!'

'Is there any sudden rupture between the courts?'

'Not at all. You know the Comte. With his immense abilities he is both superstitious and a fatalist. He has faith in Desbarolles, the chiromantist, who has told him some extraordinary things, and promised extraordinary fortune, dependent on certain contingencies. He believes in omens and presentiments, and in lucky and unlucky days and numbers. I shall soon believe in them myself; for this will be an unlucky day for me—unless you, my dear Mrs. Green, vouchsafe to rescue me.'

'Explain more clearly, if you please, Sir John.'

'The matter is this. We invited twelve, which, with Lady Treacastle and myself, makes fourteen. The Comte accepted in flattering terms. All went right until this unfortunate morning, when Madame la Comtesse regrets that a sudden hoarseness confines her to the house; but M. le Comte comes all the same—which made us thirteen. Now for no inducement on earth would the Comte dine making one of thirteen. We instantly filled the vacancy with our new young doctor, Hippocrates Browne, who expressed his gratitude for the introduction. Two hours afterwards, Sir Vincent Viator had his leg broken by the fall of a particularly sure-footed mule up in the hills, and the doctor had to set off to set it. Thirteen again! This second hiatus was speedily effaced by the acceptance of Charles Easy, our first *attaché*, who, I think, is

rather a favourite with the Comte. But at a quarter to six this evening, when already dressed, Charley receives a telegram stating that his father has had an apoplectic fit, and that he must start immediately to have any chance of seeing him alive. Once more thirteen, and my guests arriving! Lady Treacastle says, "You have only one chance now. Beg Mrs. Green to have the immense good-nature and charity to spare us her husband for two or three hours. Say how obliged I shall feel, if—"

'I consent,' said Mrs. Green, with commiserative sympathy. 'Go, George, for Lady Treacastle's sake, although it is our wedding day.'

'Singular! It is also ours; but we have had so many that we forget to count them now.'

'But my dress?' interposed the unwilling victim.

'Quite sufficient. You are dressed for your own dinner, and therefore for mine. White cravat, black coat, and the rest of it, perfect. Step into my carriage at once.'

'But, Sir John,' said Mrs. Green musingly, 'supposing your ill luck should follow you, and that, on arriving at your house, you find some other guest in default—you will be thirteen again, for the third time to-day.'

'I may as well remain here, then,' said Mr. Green.

'No,' said his wife. 'I will go with you; and, should another vacancy occur, will throw myself into the gulf and take my place at table.'

'You are an angel of goodness, Mrs. Green.'

'Perhaps I had better just put on a few diamonds instead of these jet ornaments.'

'No, no, no! You are charming as you are. Allow me to offer you my arm to the carriage. There is not a single minute to lose.'

In Weissnichtwo the distances are short. As soon as the carriage stopped, the house door was opened by the anxious butler.

'How many?' inquired Sir John, with feverish haste.

'Exactly twelve, Sir John, in the drawing room, including my lady.'

'Good! We are fourteen then, at last. Serve dinner instantly. Mrs. Green, you deserve our eternal gratitude. Join our party, now you are here; there is nothing ill-omened in fifteen, that I know of. No? You will not? You are thinking of baby. But don't eat your mutton, now it is cold. Wait for something better, even if it come late. *Au revoir*, dear madam! Thanks again.'

The host, on sitting down to dinner, although relieved of a heavy load, was nevertheless slightly absent. Scarcely was the soup removed, and the regulation glass of wine taken, when he whispered instructions to the butler. The man's face betrayed the slightest possible astonishment; but, in Sir John's house, to hear was to obey. That done, the master of the house was himself again, and played his part perfectly in every respect but one;—he scarcely tasted his own viands. The worry of the day seemed to have spoiled his appetite.

'Don't eat, Green,' he took an opportunity of saying in an undertone to the kidnapped visitor, who was seated near him. 'That is, don't eat much. Make only half a dinner. I mean to sup.'

'Strange advice for the giver of a feast!' thought Green to himself. 'I am to lunch three times to-day, and not dine at all!' Curiosity to see how it would end, led him to obey the injunction.

Meanwhile, the dinner went off admirably. The Comte, the lion of the party, was pleased with himself, and therefore with everything and everybody else.

At Weissnichtwo, diplomatic dinners are brief, and are rarely followed by evening parties. Often, all is over by half-past nine or a quarter to ten. After a sober allowance of dessert and wine, the lady of the house bows blandly to her lady visitor of highest rank. They rise; everyone does the same, and the entire company proceed to the *salon*.

Coffee is served; and coffee, like iron, should be dealt with hot. The gentlemen dispose of theirs standing. After a few minutes' conversation, some one makes his bow and retires, and all the rest speedily follow.

The Comte, on this occasion, was the first to leave. He was too good a tactician to weaken, by prolonging, the brilliant impression he was conscious of having made. Mr. Green remained till the last—a well-bred way of showing that he was in no very particular hurry to desert the post he had been forced to occupy. When he did make the move to leave, Sir John said, 'Stop; we are going with you. Lady Treacastle has a mind to taste cold mutton; and, thank heaven, we shall not be thirteen.'

So they drove altogether to Green's house, which he found, to his astonishment, lighted up (internally). Mrs. Green, not taken by surprise, received them with smiles. After an hour's cheerful chat in their little drawing-room, on Sir John Treacastle's complaining of hunger, Mrs. Green opened a folding-door and disclosed a bright supper, consisting of wine and delicacies sent from the embassy, squeezed out of and subtracted from the diplomatic dinner. It was one in the morning before the slumberers of Weissnichtwo were disturbed by Sir John's carriage wheels rumbling homewards.

It was of course impossible, in a place like Weissnichtwo, to suppress the fact of the Treacastles, after their diplomatic dinner, spending the evening with the Greens. But the gossips never knew the real motive. They merely remarked that Lady Treacastle was a staunch Protestant (as it was her place to be), who took great interest in the religious societies belonging to the Church; and that, with their great interest and family connections, it might be a good thing for Green, by-and-by.

## THE COLONEL'S VALENTINE, AND ITS FATE.

## CHAPTER I.

## UP IN THE CLOUDS.

'I NEVER was guilty of such a thing in my life,' said the Colonel, calmly.

'Never sent a valentine?'

'Never.'

'Nor received one?'

'No.'

'Blighted ignorance! Here is a man to whom the most pleasing emotions are unknown; whose heart has never been wrung by the sight of its fac-simile pierced with a barbed shaft, or softened with a delicious couplet wrapped in roses! I'll tell my cousin Mary. Miss Arundel, here is a full-grown man who never sent or received a valentine.'

Now, if any one had been attentively observing him, they might have detected a slight change in the indolent composure of the Colonel's handsome features. His negligent posture became the least bit more upright, and a glance from under his sleepy eyelids towards the lady addressed as Miss Arundel, might have aroused in that same attentive observer some little of the interest of speculation. That is, if the attentive observer had been at hand; which he wasn't.

Colonel Hugh Carton had been leaning carelessly over the back of a couch on which lounged his friend and inquisitor, Francis Graham, the boyish son of the Colonel's present host. And if Colonel Carton had been asked some ten days ago what he thought about country visits in general, he would probably have answered with a shrug, 'Bores!' His opinion had undergone modification by this time, however. Perhaps the Grahams were singularly felicitous in the party of guests they contrived to draw together; perhaps ten days of such glorious weather as rarely falls to the lot of February's infancy had something to do with the complacent state of his mind. At any rate, when young Graham appealed to Miss Arundel, there was

in Colonel Carton's momentary emotion a small stir of regret that this was the last evening of his stay.

The young lady was occupied with one of those never-ending resources, the photographic albums, and she did not look up to answer her cousin's speech. It could not possibly matter to her about Colonel Carton and his valentines.

'What a noise you are making, Frank!' she said. 'You drown the music.'

'Music!' echoed Frank. 'A dissipated entreaty to "Take this cup of sparkling wine." You know I ought not to listen to that, Mary. And it makes my flesh creep, and turns you all into water-nymphs and gnomes. No. Whose caricature have you got there?'

'I have got Titiens as Margaret,' replied Miss Arundel, quietly, faithful to her book.

'Somebody dressed up to resemble her, you mean?' said Mr. Frank.

He made one or two more efforts to draw his cousin into what he called conversation, failed, gave it up, hid a yawn with some difficulty, and sauntered away. Those two were hopelessly stupid; the one as bad as the other. And suddenly something seemed to flash upon Mr. Frank, and he exclaimed, 'By George!' and looked back; but the relative positions were just as he had left them.

It might have been supposed that the Colonel, thus left free, would naturally join the young lady in her examination of Titiens as Margaret; but he did not. He only altered his position by leaning against a dark background of curtain, so as to be able to take in the whole room, with all its arrangements, at a glance. Certainly his hostess was a woman of tact. The general fault in these country-house assemblages was, he considered, that the guests were too much *en masse*; too gregarious.

Now, here and there, in Mrs. Graham's drawing-room, small tables were dotted about, admirably placed, and admitting of games for two only, apart from the rest, without being positively isolated: tables at which delightful little flirtations could and did go on with the most comfortable freedom from disturbance. Some one or two of these caught the Colonel's eye in its glance round the room, and he smiled to himself slightly. It is to be feared that he had a disposition to be cynical about them. He never flirted himself; it was an amusement that had no charm for him; but he thought this a very clever plan for parcelling off sundry pairs out of the mass of guests, and making them amuse themselves—and others who chose to look on. Then his eyes came back to Miss Arundel over her book. They rested there with a strange expression for a moment, and then dropped. Other people, perhaps, would have seen little beauty in the face, except the beauty inseparable—in a degree at least—from youth. But Colonel Carton did not see as other people did. He was up in the clouds about Mary Arundel; up in the clouds for the first time in his life. All that was most exalted; all that he would have been sceptical about a fortnight ago, tinted his thoughts of her. He threw the light of stars about her till it dazzled him. He fancied—see how visionary the practical man grows when he is touched—he fancied that, little as he sought her, they were yet together in perpetual, half-conscious thought of each other, and reference to each other's judgment. But his visit was over, and could not be prolonged. He did not yet know whether he meant to go away, having kept silence, or not.

Perhaps this uncertainty was a charm in itself; he could not tell. By-and-by, when the music began again, he left his leaning posture and approached Mary's table.

'It is a pity that pleasant things should come to an end,' said the Colonel, out of his cloud.

From any one else such a commencement as this, by an abstract

proposition, might have made her laugh; but somehow the Colonel had got into a habit of speaking to her out of his half-finished reveries, and she was used to it.

'I don't know,' responded Mary. 'They say that pleasure itself would cease to be pleasant, if it had no end.'

The Colonel meditated.

'That applies to the present only; I mean to this life,' he said.

Mary did not answer. There was such an odd mixture of grave thoughts with lighter ones in this man's talk, that he perplexed her. Just now, however, he seemed to rouse himself all at once. If he meant to speak out, there was no time for wandering off into foreign discussion.

'I never thought to close a visit such as this with so much regret,' he said. 'I am obliged to leave here to-morrow. You go also, I think?'

'Yes, I must be at home for my sister's wedding. It is fixed for the fourteenth.'

The Colonel grew a shade paler, as he looked down upon the face that was never raised to his.

'If I thought—' he began slowly.

He never finished. The voice of his restless friend broke in upon him, and he stopped. He never did anything in a hurry.

'Valentine's Day,' said Frank, catching his cousin's speech, and innocently unconscious that he could have been spared. 'A very proper day, too. Now, Mary, confess; haven't you a weakness for valentines?'

'No, Frank.'

'Carton,' said Frank solemnly, 'she is afraid of you and won't own it. Valentine's Day has never passed yet without bringing her a cargo of what she affects to despise.'

Mary laughed.

'And very amusing it is; especially when I get an original lyric from Francis Graham. You know, Frank—'

'Ch—ut! Don't add libel to your other crimes. Carton, when we wore pinafores, Mary promised to be faithful to me for ever. I would have kept my pact and waited for

her—I mean, allowed her to wait for me,' said Frank, twinkling his eye; 'but you see how it is. A wiser man than I am condemns valentines, and my poor annual offering is rejected.'

Mary answered quickly, a little displeased:—

'Frank, you carry your nonsense too far. Of course, I am very fond of valentines, and you can send me as many as you like. Real ones,' she added, trying to speak lightly; 'all done up in a beautiful lace envelope, with "To my Valentine" illuminated outside.'

Mary stopped. There was a movement in the room which she understood, and she rose, not altogether sorry to get away.

'I shall remember,' said the Colonel, turning to her. And then he added: 'I'm afraid I shall not see you to-morrow; I start early. Good night, and good bye.'

He might have held her hand a little longer than was usual or necessary; perhaps he did.

But Mary went through the other 'Good nights' with perfect calmness, and no one was sufficiently interested in her to notice that her eyes were very bright and her cheeks had more pink in them than usual. And the Colonel changed his dress and went to the smoking-room, after his habit; but he did not stay there long, and he was very silent. In the early morning, Frank Graham volunteered to accompany his friend for a mile or two. I dare say the Colonel could have dispensed with the courtesy; but he did not say so, acquiescing simply.

As he rode away, Colonel Carton turned his head, and looked slowly up along the range of windows which still had their white blinds down. It is just possible that this wistful backward look was seen, but that is Mary's business, not ours.

## CHAPTER II.

### HAUNTED.

Colonel Carton was in town; a lonely, meditative man. He had spent a whole dull month in town. He had sauntered through club-

rooms, comparatively empty; he had acquired secret, and probably lying information, respecting the operas for the forthcoming season; he had read political articles till he was choked with politics, and found himself holding an inquest on poor dead Poland in his broken sleep. He had gone about from place to place aimlessly, with a weight on his mind, and a vague belief that there was a flaw somewhere in the government of the universe, but where it was he could not tell. For when Colonel Carton rode away from the Graham's 'place in the country,' I don't think he ever contemplated the possibility that this thing which had happened to him would happen. The Colonel had never sent a valentine in his life before; he sent one then. It was not a string of mild rhymes of his own putting together; nor a purchased and printed piece of inane sweetness. It is true that he, who did nothing by halves, bethought him of the lace envelope which Mary had spoken of. She was jesting, of course; but she should have one. I don't know how many respectable dealers in such fancy goods hated the Colonel for his hardness to please; and I should be afraid to chronicle the price at which he finally secured a single envelope of the most delicate elaboration of design and finish. And on the outside of this he wrote gravely 'To my Valentine.' There might have been a comical sort of dismay in his face as he looked at the sentence; but he was not ashamed of it: he was too much in earnest. Whatever it looked like to others, it meant for him, 'To my wife—if she will have me.'

He could not have borne, of course, that indifferent eyes should see that dainty envelope and know it for his. But no one was to see it,—that is, no one but Mary. And then he had written his letter, and the light of stars got into it and filled it. He came down out of his cloud to write; solemnly in earnest. The tender words which made their escape, somehow, from his unaccustomed pen, gave him so odd a sensation when he saw them, that he

was fain to lay his hand over the page and hide them from his own eyes as he went on.

What a fool he was!

This he would have said now; for this valentine, which had grown under his hands into an almost sacred thing, never was answered.

Colonel Carton was not a conceited man; but he had a certain proper amount of pride. What had this girl seen in him that she should not only mock him first with an affectation of interest, but absolutely receive his proposal with an insulting silence?

He might not be worthy of her, perhaps; but he was her equal in society's eyes; and, at any rate, an honest man's offer of his heart and home and faithful devotion is at least worth a reply. The Colonel's pale face used to flush a little at those times when he was turning this over in his mind; indeed it might be difficult to say when he was not turning it over in some indirect fashion. He would not have told the episode to his dearest friend—by the way, I doubt whether he had a dearest friend; if he had, that same friend kept strangely aloof from him now. The Colonel had few likings; his heart would have been all his wife's, if—

Well, it was of no use to think any more about it. And, having come to that conclusion, the Colonel would deliberately begin again, and go over all the details of that visit which had been so precious to him.

By-and-by, however, the Queen's speech having gone the round of the papers, and become a thing of the past, people began to come up to town, and the season came in.

Colonel Carton went to the Opera a good deal, for the sake of the music; which was very simple and childish of him; but he didn't care for that. He rode also, as other men did; in fact he lived outwardly as though nothing strange had befallen him; but he was not content. He began to have fits of moralizing about life and its purposes; he began to feel terribly weary and oppressed with all the tramp and bustle of Carlyle's worn-out world;

—above all, and at all times, he was haunted.

Once, as he stood staring absently at the carriages, closely packed together in the grand drive, something came flapping at the Colonel's heart and awakened him. It was only a face; a young face in a bonnet, looking out towards him from one of those carriages, but with no recognition in it. He had a momentary doubt, indeed, whether it was anything more real than the spectre which always haunted him; but the doubt was only momentary. Some one said near him that the Queen was coming; but Colonel Carton did not wait to see her Majesty: he turned and went away heavily. He took himself to task for his folly, and tried to fling upon it a bit of his old cynicism. He was very angry with himself indeed. For several days he tried a faster life than was usual with him: it disgusted his fastidious taste, and he gave it up. Once again he was destined to come into indirect contact with the woman who had injured him. He was in the strangers' gallery of the 'House,' and some one tapped him on the shoulder, greeting him with effusion. It was young Francis Graham.

'How are you, old fellow? Jolly slow, isn't it?'

And then he made a gesture in the direction of the curious-looking cradle which is called the ladies' gallery.

'Mary Arundel is there, with Lady Temple—her sister, you know. Married Temple, the Member, last February.'

The Colonel made no movement at all, but kept on looking straight before him. A little fit of impatience seized him. Was he never to get rid of her? Never to be able to hear her name, or think of her, without this strange tumult of agitation? It would be better to leave England at once, he thought. And then he began to wonder, in a desultory fashion, what she thought of it all? Was she merry, like she used to be? Did she enjoy all the gaieties of a town season, with her conscience untroubled?

Perhaps it would have given him



a dreary sort of satisfaction if he could have known that Mary was not particularly merry or gay; that it was all dull work, stale and unprofitable; that the chatter of her companions, when they retired to that little sanctum where the rattle of teacups sounds so inviting, fell on her ear like the buzzing of insects, intolerably monotonous. But the Colonel could not know this; and if he had, he would not have understood why it was so. He waved off Frank's invitation to the place in the country for the autumn; he didn't think he cared about shooting, much. In fact, his plans were undecided; probably he should go to Switzerland, or to Rome; perhaps on to Jerusalem.

### CHAPTER III.

#### LADY TEMPLE'S DESK.

'Let me come in a bit, Carton. What an awful time it is since you were here!'

'Just two years,' replied the Colonel, thoughtfully. 'I hadn't this room, then.'

Frank Graham laughed, and made a grimace at the superfluity of looking-glass which surrounded him.

'No: you may get a view of yourself in any position you like. I don't know why you were put here; one of the mysteries of domestic polity, I suppose.'

The Colonel shivered slightly, as a blast of wind sounded round the house and finished up with a dismal moan at the window.

'The fire is comfortable,' he said. 'If I recollect rightly, it's different weather from that we had this time two years. Many people here, Frank?'

'Well—yes; pretty fair. You know most of them. The Temples are here; the governor wanted Sir John to quarrel with about some bill or another. And Mary Arundel is with them. Carton, don't be angry with a fellow; but, do you know, I used to fancy—'

'There's just fifteen minutes to dress in,' said the Colonel, rising with his usual deliberation; 'and I don't know that I can do it, so—'

'In polite language, I'm to "take and hook it," eh? Well, I'll not hinder such a get-up as yours. Bye-bye.'

Colonel Carton gave exactly five out of the fifteen minutes remaining to meditation; which did him very little service. So he would have to meet her again. How? He tried to settle this question, and failed. After all, it did not depend entirely upon himself; it was as well, perhaps, to leave it to chance.

He was down in excellent time, notwithstanding the wasted five minutes; and it fell to his lot to take Miss Arundel in to dinner.

I don't suppose that a more taciturn couple ever descended a staircase together. The Colonel had renewed his acquaintance with Miss Arundel indeed, but with the most inimitable distance and gravity. No one, seeing them meet, would have suspected the existence of those past passages in their lives which once drew them so closely together. And the Colonel did not think it necessary to make conversation either. Beyond the barest civilities, he said nothing, and seemed quite content that Mary's attention should be wholly engrossed by her other neighbour.

That night the Colonel played chess with Lady Temple at one of the convenient little tables before mentioned. It was rather a silent game, so that they could not have made much progress towards intimacy by means of words; neither can I tell how it was that before he checkmated her the Colonel caught himself speaking to Lady Temple with his old peculiar mixture of frankness and reserve accorded only to his friends, while she listened to him, and answered him too, as though they had known each other from childhood instead of having met for the first time an hour or two ago. The psychologist might resolve it into a simple question of natural affinities; at any rate, whatever the cause, the result is certain, that these two sought each other out from the first night of their meeting as old friends might have done.

'My sister is going to sing,' said

Lady Temple, one evening, as the pieces were placed. 'I'm afraid this will be a poor game, for I always listen to Mary. You have heard her?'

'No,' the Colonel was not aware that Miss Arundel sang at all.

'Yet you must have met here once before, I think?'

'Yes.'

'That is strange. Perhaps it was—ah, yes, I remember; singing was forbidden to her just then; she is never very strong. Do you play first?'

Colonel Carton propelled the king's pawn into its accustomed square, and appeared to watch his adversary's move with interest.

'Miss Arundel is much quieter than she was two years ago. I remember that she was the life of all pleasure arrangements. If she is in delicate health, that explains it.'

'Ask her,' said Lady Temple, laughing. 'She will tell you it's old age.—Mary is odd.'

The Colonel looked at her ladyship's blonde face and fair hair speculatively. She must be at least five years younger than Mary, he thought. And then, with a finger on the piece he was about to move, he stopped. As a rule, he did not care for amateur singing; people in the constant habit of hearing first-rate professionals seldom do. But this was another thing, altogether different from the amateur singing of his experience. He kept his eyes on the board steadily, but Lady Temple saw that he was not thinking about the game.

'Suppose we give it up for a time?' said her ladyship.

He looked up quickly, with a slight smile.

'I beg your pardon, Lady Temple; not unless you wish it; I move the bishop.'

Foolish play, as Lady Temple knew, and utterly foreign to his usual tactics; but she said nothing, and the Colonel lost the game in a few moves.

'For the first time!' said her ladyship, triumphantly; 'we will not begin again to-night.'

Colonel Carton acquiesced. Mary was still at the piano, and likely to

remain there. When such assemblies as these get hold of a fine voice, there is very little mercy shown to its owner. By-and-by the Colonel got restless, and went up again to Lady Temple.

'You said your sister was not strong. Won't she be tired?'

'Yes,' said her ladyship; 'I shall put a stop to it.'

Perhaps she expected him to accompany her to the piano, but he did not; neither did he join the group of enthusiasts who loaded the singer with thanks and flattery. Mary and he were seldom near each other; when they were, it was as though they had both touched an iceberg, and never again could thaw into any degree of kindness or warmth. Yet still the Colonel stayed on. He had only come down for a day or two, but a week was gone already. He did not know how closely those keen eyes of young Graham's watched him, nor how perplexed the young man was with his behaviour.

'They make love like crowned heads,' said Frank; 'that is, if it isn't all a sell; I never saw such stately politeness between lovers.'

But there was no love-making in the case; nothing at all like it.

And one evening Colonel Carton determined with himself that he had stayed too long already, and would positively take his departure the next morning. He was standing indolently in the doorway of the back drawing-room when he made this decision; and round the fire, in that cosiest of retreats, he saw Lady Temple and her sister, two or three other young ladies, and Frank Graham, all in some animated discussion—all, that is, except Mary. Her face was turned towards the fire, and the profile, which was all he saw, struck him with its expression of weary listlessness. Suddenly Mary turned and looked at him—a strange look, averted hastily in a moment, for she had not known that he was there. But the Colonel saw the quick rush of colour over her face—saw her put up one hand to hide it, and felt desperately that he must go away, or once again he should be a fool.

'Carton' cried Frank, darting up, and drawing him towards the group. 'The very man I wanted. He never sent one in his life. I heard him boast about it in that very room. Isn't it a true bill, Carton? I've adopted your opinions. Bear witness with me that valentines are silly, childish, nonsensical, everything that's bad.'

The Colonel, with a bitterness that the occasion did not seem to demand, replied—

'As mediums for inflicting pain and unwarrantable insult, I think them admirable, Frank.'

Everyone looked up at the Colonel as he said this. Even Frank began rashly, 'Hallo, old fellow, I didn't think——' and then stopped, not knowing what to say. Lady Temple was the first to break the uneasy silence, which she did with an assumed indifference.

'Colonel Carton judges them harshly. I have had many a laugh over mine before I was married. I don't get any now. I remember that the last I had was on my wedding morning, and I never opened it.'

'Never opened it!' repeated Frank. 'What a shame!'

'No. It wasn't likely I could attend to such matters then. When I took off the outside cover, and saw what it was, I threw it with a lot of old letters into my travelling desk, and there it is now for anything I know to the contrary. It's odd I never had the curiosity to look for it; suppose we have a search now? Frank, you may fetch the desk, if it isn't too heavy for you.'

No one spoke while Lady Temple unlocked the travelling-desk, which looked too ponderous for a lady's use, and had papers in it suggestive of Sir John's big caligraphy. No one noticed the tall figure behind her chair; no one saw the lips compressed and white, the head bending lower and lower, and the long fingers pressing into each other as Lady Temple dived into the secret recesses of the desk. He saw it all now; all his blind stupidity, and what it had caused, flashed across him as Lady Temple held up the

long-hidden envelope. Half a dozen small hands were stretched out eagerly for it; one, larger than these, suddenly pressed somewhat heavily on her ladyship's shoulder.

'Lady Temple, may I entreat of your goodness to restore to me that letter?'

'Colonel Carton—to you?'

'To me. I sent that valentine; the only one I ever did or ever shall send. Lady Temple, on my honour it contains nothing that could offend you in any way. Another time I will explain fully; now, to my regret and remorse concerning it, grant my request.'

Lady Temple did not hesitate a moment. Something in this man's agitated manner appealed to her too strongly, and once again the Colonel held in his hand the luckless envelope of elaborate design and finish, and looked down upon the address in his own writing, 'To my Valentine.'

'It strikes me that we are being selfish,' said Lady Temple, shutting up the desk briskly. 'Take it back, Frank, and, young ladies, follow me, if you please, into the drawing-room, where everybody is wondering why there is no music.'

The Colonel stepped forward out of his corner. Did Mary know? Did she understand all, and forgive him?

'Not you,' said the Colonel, when she rose to go with the rest; 'not you, quite yet. Surely my punishment has lasted long enough!'

They stood together on the hearth, and the Colonel held out the unhappy valentine above a tiny jet of flame.

'You know that it is your property,' he said. 'I never thought of your sister at all; never thought of any other Miss Arundel than you. How was I to know you were not the eldest?'

'If it is mine, give it to me, Colonel Carton.'

'Presently. I asked you in it to be my wife, Mary; as you had a right to expect I should do. What could I think when I got no answer? Perhaps we have both misjudged each other?'

'Perhaps.'

'Through this error? We have been dreadfully polite these last few days,' said the Colonel, with a comical ruefulness. 'I couldn't have stood it any longer; I meant to go away to-morrow.'

The Colonel paused. The light of stars began to shine about her again as he held out his hand.

'Mary, I would be very true and loving to you. Will you be my wife?'

Perhaps Mary was a little bit afraid of a scene just then, knowing that at any moment she might be summoned to the piano; and she was not strong. Her answer, when she did answer in words, was another question:—

'Will you give me my valentine at last, and let me go?'

I think the Colonel was satisfied with it.

## TU QUOQUE.

### I.

**I** THOUGHT that we twain together  
In one might have blent our days;  
If under no light of passion,  
Yet in safer, shadier ways:  
Or never, be sure, that evening,  
Yourself had I dared to claim;  
So I thought:—some day, proud maiden,  
You may wish you had thought the same.

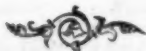
### II.

'Tis true, I am grave and silent,  
You, light as a bird on wing;  
But there's strength in the latter summer,  
And only a promise in spring;  
And I thought that our differing natures  
Would have linkt in the wedded name;  
So I thought:—some day, proud maiden,  
You may wish you had thought the same.

### III.

There are gales that change in an instant  
Still seas to foaming snow;  
And I thought I would be your pilot  
If ever those gales should blow;  
I'd have guarded you, oh! so safely,  
Against all ill that came;  
So I thought:—some day, proud maiden,  
You may wish you had thought the same.

W. J. L.



## THE CONVENTIONALITIES OF LIFE.



arms which it included were *party per pale* or the reverse; whether the dexter division should be described as a *cross patonce* or: between five dickey-birds *proper* (or *improper*, as the case may be), and the sinister division as *quarterly* (or *monthly*), with its alternate divisions filled by *fleurs de lis*, resembling attenuated aces of clubs, and griffins *passant, guardant, or rampant*, which of the fields was *gules*, and which *azure*, is more than I can tell you. The only emblem in it which was at all suggestive of the deceased was the crest, which certainly bore some resemblance to a sugar-loaf, and may have been aptly introduced by the disconsolate widow in pious memory of Mr. J.—'s original calling, of which I will only now say that it embraced more refinement than could be detected in his manners.

Oh, *risum teneatis*? Which of us who has heard of poor Jones's first entry into the house of Baker and Sweeting as a humble clerk on fifty pounds a year (his papa was a pork-butcher in the Borough Road), who will not smile, I say, at the silly ostentation of this sham heraldry? '*In calo quies*,' so ran the motto of that strange device. Is it not wonderful that the attainment of our final rest should be announced with such a fuss and flourish here below? Four sable-plumed and velvet-trapped horses to drag one man to his grave! Eight black-coated gentlemen to walk beside the hearse, grim ushers of the black rod (that instrument being tipped with gold at each end), wearing black kid gloves, and—as if their hats were not black enough for all funeral purposes—enshrouding them with blacker hatbands! As for the two speechless janitors who stood on either side of the front door when the mournful pageant proceeded on its way, what shall I say of them, with their crape scarves and muffled broomsticks, their shabby boots and red noses, except that, if there be but one step between the sublime and the ridiculous, that step was the very flagstone on which they took up their position?

Oh, Custom! oh, second Nature! what consummations of folly do we tolerate for thy sake! Strip civilized life of its conventionalities, and what would become of society? We are ushered into the world by them. They hang about us when we leave it. Say you were born, good sir, 'about three of the clock in the afternoon, with a white head, and—' &c., as Falstaff hath it; was not the street-door knocker enveloped some four-and-twenty hours previously with a white kid glove? A *brown* one would not have done, you see. Papa would not have liked it. Nurse would have cried Fie. Nay, I doubt whether Mr. Jeames would have tied up a coloured gauntlet there at all. Can any one tell me why it is *de rigueur* to employ blanched leather under these circumstances? Of course not. No one knows why. No one can afford the slightest explanation. You may throw down *that* glove, a dozen times, and no one will accept the challenge.

Let us pass over the bassinet (called, in my nursery days, a cradle), the WELCOME BABY pincushion, the traditional basket lined with pink silk, the

OTHER day I passed by a house, the upper windows of which were half obscured by a large lozenge-shaped tablet of wood, painted about with various colours and devices, of whose nature and signification I am profoundly ignorant. I believe it was erected in memory of the late Mr. Jones by his widow (Mrs. J.), and is called an 'achievement' (which you will have the goodness to pronounce as *hatchment*); but whether the

monthly nurse, clatching her stout umbrella and bottle of—of eau de Cologne, we will say. These are everlasting types of babydom. They turn up at the first appearance of little ladies and gentlemen with the regularity of a recurring decimal in life's numeration. Imagine such an event happening without these concomitants; but of course it couldn't, at least in any 'genteel' family. See, the doctor is just taking leave, after his last visit, having bowed to mamma quite pleasantly, and gently touched the sleeping infant's cheek with his right-hand little finger (the one with the carbuncle ring). Papa follows him to the door, and shakes hands, slipping something into his palm at the same moment. What does the doctor do on his part? Does he seem surprised? No. Does he look at his fee? No. Does he acknowledge it in any way? No. He only laughs, and puts it in his pocket with an abstracted air, as if it had been a snuff-box. He makes no remark but 'Good morning,' and continues to laugh in a sort of subdued, gentlemanlike chuckle until he steps into his brougham, when his countenance instantly reassumes an appearance of intense gravity. Perhaps, as the carriage drives off, he condescends to examine the contents of that little paper parcel. What does it contain? Let me see. So many round shiny sovereigns, so many round less shiny shillings. Now if the shillings (or their equivalent and aggregate value) were not there, Mr. Doctor would look upon himself as an injured man. The sovereign is the largest gold coin of the realm, but greedy Mr. Doctor wants a larger one. Why?

'Because the smallest fee I can take is a guinea,' methinks I hear him answering, somewhat angrily. Pardon me, my dear sir, there is no such coin. You shall have twenty-one shillings, or twenty-two, if you like, but don't pretend that guineas are issued for you more than for Mr. Strapwell, the bootmaker, or the artist who designed your coat. Once upon a time such specie really was current, but it has long become extinct, and to pretend to believe in

its present existence is a monstrous affectation.

Among other peculiarities of the medical profession, may be noticed the habit which its practitioners have of avoiding the possessive pronoun in addressing invalids. 'Let me see the tongue,' or 'Let me feel the pulse,' is a usual form adopted instead of the ordinary phrase. It will be observed, too, that all physicians hold their heads slightly on one side in the presence of their patients. Besides being indicative of attention, it has the effect of suggesting a kind and conciliating disposition, which is sure to please. How the famous Dr. Abernethy, with his uncouth manners and vulgar repartee, managed to become so extensively employed is a marvel; but it is certain that few would tolerate his rudeness now. Perhaps in former days the distinctive character of the doctor's dress had an influence of its own. The gold-headed cane, the elaborate shirt-ruffle, the massive snuff-box, tapped so pompously in consultation, may all have exercised a spell with which the present generation is unacquainted. But though these conventionalities have passed away, others obtain, which we involuntarily respect. No medical man who values his position as a practitioner will wear even a neckerchief or gloves but of the most sombre colour; while a surgeon with moustachios (unless he happens to be in the army) is still regarded with suspicion. The absurdity of associating a certain distribution of hair over the face with the qualifications or attributes of a learned profession can only be realized by example. A clergyman, a barrister, or a physician may cultivate his whiskers unbuked; but let the faintest down appear on his upper lip, and it is immediately considered unprofessional. The opponents of the moustache movement no doubt imagined that they were resisting an effort of coxcombry. Yet we may doubt whether future generations will not regard their unshaven ancestors of 1865 as wiser and less dandified than our own grandfathers, who tortured them-



selves every morning for the sake of a smooth face.

Among professional conventionalities, none are more apparent than those which belong to the parson and lawyer. With the former, a distinctive character of dress is a necessary peculiarity; but it is a peculiarity not more marked than that which may be often noticed in the manner and even voice of the wearer. Nothing can be more stereotyped and monotonous than the ordinary 'delivery' which we are accustomed to hear from English pulpits. How it originated, when it was first adopted, and why educated gentlemen will persist in perpetuating such an absurdity, I have never been able to ascertain. Possibly it was introduced by the Puritans, to whom posterity is also indebted for that singular delight in black trousers which was once a Sunday characteristic of the British shopman. But certain it is that nine-tenths of the clergy fall instinctively into a method of utterance which is unknown outside the walls of a church. It is equally removed from the principles of elocution and the parlance of everyday life. One familiar expression will, indeed, indicate its actual value to the hearer. When we wish to describe a bad actor or an electioneering hero whose oratory is beneath contempt, we say that he 'preaches.' But good preaching should be at least good talking, and we are therefore reduced to the conclusion that the ordinary pulpit voice is a poor one.



So accustomed are we to this sing-song intonation of pulpit delivery, that the occasional substitute of a clergyman's natural voice actually takes us by surprise, and almost sounds irreverent in some ears which involuntarily associate a dismal twanging with propriety of

It is difficult to convey on paper any adequate illustration of vocal sound not being musical, and the more so because this clerical enunciation varies with the length of the sentence spoken. I recently heard a sermon in which the metre was eminently *trochaic*. It scanned, was pronounced, and might have been punctuated in the following manner:

'Oh my, Christîan, brô-thâr!

Oh my, Christîan, sis-târ!' &c.

Any one who analyses the style of pulpit oratory will find it usually consisting of an alternate rise and depression of the voice, with a marked emphasis on two consecutive words at short intervals. Let us take a passage from Macaulay by way of illustration:—'There are no errors which are so likely to be drawn into precedent, and therefore none which it is so necessary to expose, as the errors of persons who have a just title to the gratitude and admiration of posterity.' The proper inflection of the voice in reading this sentence is sufficiently obvious. But there is a section of young Oxford men who would thus render it.

'There are no errors which are so likely to be drawn into precedent, and therefore none which it is so necessary to expose, as the errors of persons who have a just title to the gratitude and admiration of posterity.'

The sentence, divided into syllables, might thus be expressed by musical notes:—

speech. Much of the beauty of our English Liturgy is lost in the universal adoption of emphasis on certain words, often wrongly marked, but still continued by a species of tradition. Some curious instances of this mistake occur in the recital of the Exhortation and

\* I hope my musical readers will not be mystified by this confessedly unmusical passage.

the prayer of St. Chrysostom; and it is remarkable that, even in the Lord's Prayer, the fourth word is almost always wrongly emphasized. While on this subject, I hope I shall be excused for calling attention to the extraordinary custom which exists among a few members of almost every congregation, of saying their prayers in their hats, on first entering a church. It is a practice which is at once indecorous and absurd. Hassocks are meant to kneel upon; and as kneeling is a recognized act of devotion in our Church, there can be no excuse for a man's standing erect with his head half thrust into the ugliest covering that was ever devised for it, when he desires to say his prayers.

The conventionalities of legal rhetoric and its pronunciation, are not less strongly marked than those of clerical language.

Those to whom the ordinary conduct and procedure of a court of justice are familiar, might easily determine, by the sound of his voice alone, whether the counsel for the plaintiff is examining his own witness, or whether he is cross-examining one for the defence. The easy, conciliating manner adopted in the former case, presents a remarkable contrast to the stern, matter-of-fact tone by which the latter may be recognized.

Who has not heard such questions as—

'Now, Mr. Edward Jones, I believe you are connected with the business of a soap boiler?'

Witness.—'Yes, I am.'

Counsel.—'Have you been so connected for any length of time?' (goes through the form of inclining his head, as if to listen with attention for answer).

Witness.—'Yes; for many years.'

Counsel (approvingly, with a musical cadence of voice, repeats), 'For many years?' (aloud). 'Business been a very prosperous one, I think?'

Witness.—'Well, sir, I think I may say so; middling.'

Counsel (with an exceedingly pleasant smile responds in a cheerful dactyl).—'Vê-ry wêll! Now, Mr. Jones, will you have the goodness

to tell the Court what you know about,' &c., &c. (Here the learned gentleman will probably pull his gown further on his shoulders, and look round the court as if to recruit for listeners).

We may describe the above as what old Italian grammarians called the 'stile amichevole.' But let us hear the same gentleman a little later in the day.

Counsel (as witness is leaving the box).—'Stop a minute, Mr. John Tomkins! I think you said just now that you had been acquainted with the plaintiff for twelve months?' (knowingly).

Witness.—'Yes. There or thereabouts.'

Counsel.—'Oh! (Ironically.) Oh! there or thereabouts, EH?'

Witness.—'Yes. I can't say exactly to the day.'

Counsel.—'Oh! you can't speak exactly to the day?' (triumphantly). 'Well, never mind the day, Mr. Tomkins, but have the goodness to tell us how often, in the course of that twelve months, you met the plaintiff' (arms a-kimbo, and head on one side).

Witness.—'Well, sir, when first I came to Portsmouth—'

Counsel (interrupting).—'Have the goodness, sir, to confine yourself to the question; we don't want to hear anything about Portsmouth,' (contemptuously).

Witness.—'Well, a good many times, off and on.'

Counsel.—'Oh! a good many times off and on; and pray how many was that? Half a dozen?' (derisively).

Witness.—'Yes, more than that. In fact—' (hesitating).

Counsel.—'Now, sir, ON YOUR OATH was it twenty times?'

Witness.—'Well—really—I—'

Counsel.—'Come, come, sir, recollect yourself. Will you swear it was ten times?'

Witness.—'Yes, it might be.'

Counsel.—'We don't want to hear what it might be; (rapping the table in front). Look up, sir, if you please, to the Court, and answer the question; was it at least ten times?'

Witness.—'Yes.'

Counsel.—'Oh, it was, was it?'

Now, Mr. Tomkins, I ASK, YOU, did, you, ever, on, any, of, those, ten, occasions, tell, the, plaintiff, that—' &c. &c.

Who has ever listened to such dialogue as this without being wearied at the endless repetition of this stale chicanery? The same old rapid innuendoes, the same affectation of surprise or misapprehension, the same feeble efforts of irony, the same vulgar suggestions of doubt, which could not be expressed to men of spirit elsewhere with impunity—even the knuckle rapping, and the twitch of the gown, are all reproduced year after year by certain members of the bar, who seem to look on these peculiarities as the Shibboleth of their profession. Where, out of a law court, does a man ever preface his question to the person to whom he addresses by 'I ASK YOU,' and what would be thought of a witness who should reply in such a form as, 'I ANSWER YOU?' What is the use of reminding a witness over and over again that he is on his oath, when he has been sworn in due form five minutes before?

A physician's prescription is written in Latin for many obvious reasons, but among others, I believe, to prevent the patient from understanding it. Could we assign a better plea for the dense obscurity in which legal English is wrapped? Can any one but a lawyer unravel those curiously involved sentences in which the nominative case is separated so far from its verb, that we begin to think it has no right to one at all—in which synonyms abound to such a wonderful extent, and in which there is as great a choice of prepositions as Mr. Lindley Murray himself could have suggested?

We will suppose that a certain mythical personage had insulted another imaginary gentleman: we should have it set down,

'That, *Whereas* he the said John Doe, of Number Onety-one, Caret Street, Asterisk Square, in the Parish of St. Somebody, County Diddlesex, gentleman, did on the blank day of Dash, one thousand eight hundred and something more before, and in the presence of the aforesaid Richard

Roe, of No Hall, Nowhere, Captain in Her Majesty's most Honourable Company of Horse-marines, then and there intimate, hint, suggest, insinuate, propose, and imply in, with, from, by and through certain gestures of a derisive kind and sort already set forth, and hereinafter to be more particularly described, and furthermore did actually and of his own free will and pleasure in manner aforesaid, videlicet, that is to say, maliciously, malevolently, malignantly, spitefully, with evil purpose and unjustifiable intent, utter, proclaim, declare, tell, announce, advertise, publish, enunciate, and say that the said Richard Roe was an ass; and *Whereas*, &c., &c.

These are the traditional conventionalities which Dame Justice delights in retaining, together with horse-hair wigs and pigskin, red tape and robes of bombazin, and 'all that undesirable messuago' of absurdities for which we have to pay such a heavy ground-rent.

What shall we say of the stage, and of the long, stern sway which Custom has exercised over histrionic representations? The whole history of Dramatic Art, from its earliest development down to our own time, is replete with conventionalities. In the Greek theatres, there was one species of scene for Tragedy, another for Comedy, a third for Satiric Plays. The tragic scene represented the front of a two-storied palace, with three separate entrances. A royal door in the centre with two inferior portals on either side. Out of the former stalked Agamemnon, king of men, Corinthian Creon, or Œdipus the Tyrant (I mean, of course, the gentlemen who sustained those illustrious characters). But those who filled the minor parts of the rôles, the 'deuteragonistes' and 'tritagonistes,' sidled off the stage modestly, right and left, as became their humble rank.

Have you ever seen Don Giovanni disappearing with the Prince of Darkness through a trap-door, or Mephistopheles hurrying Dr. Faustus to his deplorable fate in the midst of blue fire, and not felt a sensation of awe at that horrible, but supremely ridiculous performance?

Stage managers, 2000 years ago, employed similar means to gratify a sensation-loving audience. There were 'Charonian steps,' which led from the Greek proscenium below to Hades, and up and down which the shades of departed heroes were continually passing. If Queen Katherine was carried by angels to the 'skies' of the Princess's Theatre, the '*Deus ex machina*' floated with equal facility into the Athenian heaven. Nay, the very thunder of cloud-compelling Jove himself was imitated, and no doubt became as important to Hecuba in the days of Euripides, as it seems to Mr. Boucicault in *The Colleen Bawn*.

The poetical comparison between Life and Life's portraiture has been so often drawn—the parallel has grown so hacknied, since Shakespeare's time, that people have almost come to accept it as a literal truth—and to apply a realistic standard to the efforts of their buskin'd brethren. But ask any eminent tragedian to lay his hand upon his padded bosom and declare what proportion of praise he could expect from such a criticism.

When the immortal bard made Hamlet tell the players that the purpose of their art was 'to hold the mirror up to nature,' he knew full well that mirror must distort sometimes to suit our moral optics. The truth is, that between the action of every-day life and the by-play of the comedian, there is a *hiatus*—a great gulf, wider and deeper than that recess in which the fiddlers sit, and which we are content should never be bridged over. If we could see ourselves reflected as we really are, across the orchestra, who would care for the representation? We should be *ennuyé*, bored with realities; our social aspect would seem as grim and ghastly as a natural complexion behind the footlights. Accordingly, we accept conventionalism in dramatic language, action, manners, 'situations,' and sentiment. Playgoers are accustomed to it from their youth up; and an old fogey will sit gravely in the boxes and wag his head in approbation at a scene which, if he was beholding

there for the first time in his life, would only excite his ridicule.

I once took a young friend, who had never entered a theatre before, to see a popular opera. She was delighted with the overture, the scenery, the costumes. But in the middle of the second act, the *primo tenore* began to make love to the heroine of the piece and sang divinely. Everybody's attention was fixed upon him, and being considerably touched myself, I turned round to see how it had affected my companion. To my surprise, she was in a fit of suppressed laughter.

'Don't you admire that song?' I asked, somewhat astonished.

'Yes,' she said, with tears in her eyes; 'but why *will* he spread out both his hands upon his waistcoat in that extraordinary way?'

It was too true. The unfortunate young man had adopted this means of expressing his emotion. Such gestures are by no means uncommon in operatic 'passages'; but their extreme absurdity could only be recognized by a novice.

The stage walk is frequently little better than a strut, the stage laugh a guffaw, the soliloquy a declamation, the aside speech generally louder than the dialogue, the stage gentleman—ah! what shall we say of those wondrous exquisites in mauve-coloured trousers, blue coats, yellow gloves, and crimson neckties, who enter their friends' houses in such exuberant spirits, with such remarkable rapidity?—who pull off their bran-new hats so ingeniously that the white leather lining shall be conspicuous to the audience—who are attended by such witty, dapper, and delightfully impertinent little grooms—and who invariably bring their portmanteaus with them into the drawing-room when they come off a journey? Have you ever noticed these heroes, after dinner, *en grande toilette*?—how they stand on alternate legs and bend the other (like the Nymphs and Graces on Etty's canvas)?—how incessantly they use their white pocket-handkerchiefs?—how affable they are to each other?—how polite to the ladies? What brilliant things they do and utter! What neatly-rounded

sentences fall from their magenta lips! How charmingly their clothes are cut! What magnificent jewelry sparkles on their delicate white hands! I have heard of titled ladies who, sitting in a private box, have been known to *raffider* on such attractions — who have fallen straightway in love with these charming swains; and I am not surprised. Their manners belong to an age of gallantry and deportment which has passed away from English homes—which is unknown in Belgravia and the 'Corinthian' West, but which cannot, under certain conditions, fail to gratify the female heart. Seen from across the footlights, these gentlemen are as fine gentlemen as you could wish to meet. It is only Miss Plantagenet who detects the nature of their complexions in the green-room, and who hears them abandon in their prattle that troublesome initial consonant, which they have retained so bravely on 'the boards.'

The voice of the stage lady is an essentially artificial voice. There are rich deep tones for the matron, and there is a genteel *false* for the heroine. Pantomime fairies, and princesses in an extravaganza, pitch their accents in a key so shrill, that they seem to be screaming their parts instead of saying them. The recital of blank verse is accompanied by one invariable intonation. They run up and down upon the octave A with unerring precision, and you may point out in the libretto the very word in each line which marks the cadence of their voice.

There was a time when stage conventionalities were more numerous and remarkable than they are at present—a time when Cleopatra appeared bepatched, in a farthingale, and Alexander wore his helmet over a full-bottomed wig. There was a time when, by a venerable dramatic tradition, Hamlet was compelled to kick over a chair when the ghost appeared in his mother's presence. A few of these queer old usages have been handed down to the present time, and excite the wonder of the uninitiated. Such ejaculations as 'Egad, sir!' 'Odds life, man!' and 'Psha!' such elegant pronunciation

as *Sycowan* and *kyind* are unknown in private life; but in the minor theatres these peculiarities of speech may still be heard. To this day when a letter is to be read upon the stage, the gentleman who performs that duty generally holds it in one hand and slaps it open with the other. This may have been a necessary fiction when the dust of the pounce-box had to be brushed away, but it is ridiculous to allow it to survive the invention of blotting-paper.

There are, indeed, some stage stratagems which, however absurd in themselves, are indispensable both to the actor's convenience and the enlightenment of his audience. A movement of the hand or arm in an operatic duet frequently serves as a private signal between the tenor and soprano, besides affording a cue to the conductor as to the due relation of his accompaniment. The systematic change of position which we notice among the characters of a play during a conversation not only relieves the eye of the spectator, but often materially assists the action of the piece. Letters are read aloud for an obvious reason; and when we find two gentlemen sitting down on two chairs in the middle of the stage, and recounting to each other incidents of their respective lives with which they must be mutually familiar, we forgive the formality of the proceeding, because we know it is the only means by which we can learn the basis of the plot.

The proprieties of the drama are, in short, analagous, to some extent, with certain conditions of pictorial art. There are occasions when we can dispense with neither; but an undue exaggeration of their importance to the exclusion of nature will be equally fatal to both.

Let us turn from theatrical methodism back to the modes and fashions of private life, and consider how much and how strangely we are influenced in this generation by the idea that what everybody does must be right. I suppose, for instance, there never was a time when gentlemen aimed less at the distinction of individual dress than the present. Twenty years ago the



cut of a man's coat was part of his character, and helped us to understand each other's weak points better than all the skill of the physiognomist. There were the dashing 'cutaway' of precocious youth, and the frock or hideous 'swallow-tail' of sober life. The 'gent' was recognized by his enormous neckerchief or slangy 'Newmarket touch,' with buttons nearly the size of cheese-plates. There were 'sporting' shirts adorned with Reynard's head and brush, with emblems of cricket and field sports, with ballet-girls or bulldogs' heads, *au choix*. There were 'fancy' waistcoats embroidered with elaborate skill, and which proclaimed a dignity unknown among us now. We have abandoned those conspicuous articles of attire, but, in doing so, we have adopted a conventionalism in dress which has placed us all on one common level. There is one type for the morning coat, another for evening wear, each of which is universally accepted. Our trousers are all cut in the same style. Our hats, with the exception of those worn by right reverend gentlemen, are precisely alike. One characteristic alone distinguishes Paterfamilias from Young England, and that is the shape of his collar. Even this bids fair to be effaced, and school-boys and their grandsires will soon cut the same figure as far as tailors are concerned.

Who can explain the philosophy of 'full dress'? It is replete with anomalies, with contradictions, with inconsistencies, and is yet guarded by a stern law of custom, which no one dares resist. In the first place we have two distinct kinds of costume which we associate with festivity, one to be worn in the presence of our Sovereign, the other in the society of our friends. Instead of selecting the latest fashion for the former, we are obliged to adopt that which was in vogue a hundred years ago, and which, though far superior to more recent inventions, we could not wear on any other occasion without exposing ourselves to ridicule.

But while we go to court attired like our great-grandfathers, our

wives appear there in modern dress, made inconveniently long for an occasion when every inch of standing room is of value. The ordinary evening dress for men is one which might be worn with equal propriety at a funeral or by an hotel waiter. Black cloth suits, shaped in the meanest and most formal manner, and only partially relieved by an evidence of white linen, are conventionally supposed to be the most fitting garments for the ball-room or the dinner-table. Ugly and unserviceable in its design; gloomy in its colour; adorned with buttons and button-holes which are never intended to meet; fitted with pockets which no one dares to use; utterly devoid of any fold or accident of form whereby the arms may be rested or gracefully employed, the modern dress-coat is perhaps the most unsatisfactory that has ever been devised since British flesh was stained with woad. Nor are trousers a whit less ugly. They neither display a good leg nor conceal a bad one, but reduce the appearance of our limbs to one dull and uninteresting uniformity. The full-draped leggings of the Turk have a picturesqueness of their own. The bare-kneed highland laddie may rival an Apollo from his kilt downwards. Even honest Gaffer Jones, with his grey breeches and worsted stockings, is, artistically speaking, a more dignified object than we present in our straight uncomfortable leg-cases.

Country gentlemen, engaged in active rural pursuits, have, indeed, long felt the absurdity of adhering rigidly to the prevailing fashion; and it is to their good sense on this point, as well as to the exigencies of real service, that we owe the retention of 'cords' and 'tops' for hunting, and the long jack-boots which distinguish the angler's costume.

When 'knickerbockers' were first adopted for modern wear by volunteers and sportsmen, it was hoped that they would gradually supersede trousers in the city as well as in the field. It was even whispered that a certain royal personage would set an example by introducing their use, as well as making some other



important alterations in our dress. It is to be hoped that the idea will not be lost sight of. All attempted reformations of the kind are hopeless, unless they have an origin in those quarters where fashions usually take their rise. Whatever may have been the merits or demerits of the Bloomer costume, no lady would have cared to imitate a taste which, in England, was first flaunted at the casinos and behind the counter of a gin-shop.

But gentlemen need not be ashamed to wear that which the First Gentleman in England may choose to wear, especially if the selection be a good one, as in the present case it promised to be. Mr. Punch thought fit to make merry with the notion; but the ridicule was ill-timed, and, may-be, did injury to a good cause in which more artistic interest is involved than the public is perhaps aware of.

It is precisely because our present dress is so ugly, and so utterly unmanageable in a painter's or sculptor's hands, that a great number of foolish conventionalisms have become identified with modern art. Portrait busts of men, for instance, rarely represent the costume of the day. They are almost invariably draped round with a series of heavy folds, which are more suggestive of a wet blanket than anything else. It would be impossible to say who first adopted this ridiculous expedient (infinitely more ridiculous than that which it purports to avoid); but, once accepted, it continues to be accepted as legitimate work, and nothing short of an art-revolution will probably alter the fashion.

Pictorial methodisms are, as a rule, of too technical a nature to be understood by the general public. Yet most of us can appreciate the absurd standards of taste which characterised the work of the Georgian age, and are sufficiently familiar with the real beauties of landscape to be able to laugh at Constable and his 'brown tree.' There was a time when gentlemen thought they could improve upon nature in their own inventions; when Alpine scenes were 'composed,' as the phrase was, within

the four walls of a London studio, and green grass was toned down to a genteel drab colour, to suit the requirements of High Art. Poor Haydon conceived that it was beneath his dignity to paint figures less than life-size, and endeavoured to derive a classic inspiration by puzzling over his Homer with a Lexicon. Is there a more lamentable episode in the history of British Art, than that ardent, clever, vain, unfortunate egotist raving about the Grand School; taking heaven by storm with his prayers; stumbling over mutilated fragments of the antique, and leaving behind him, after a terrible death, works whose fame has scarce survived his own generation?

The pedantry of that day is fast passing into disrepute; but a few old veterans of the brush and chisel still cling fondly to its ancient traditions.

The deities of Olympus—the Nymphs and Graces of a bygone age—still linger here and there on exhibition walls; still find some rich old fogey of a Macenas to appreciate their naked charms. A venerable sculptor, who shall be nameless, but who rose to eminence in an age when Dr. Lemprière's famous dictionary was the artist's favourite text-book, and every limner was supposed to be familiar with the romantic details of the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey,'—this brave old sculptor, I say, modelled not long ago a charming group of a mother and child, in an attitude which, to do him justice, he had borrowed from the realities of peasant life. A friend who had seen and admired the design at an early stage, was surprised, on a second visit, to find the Contadina arrayed in a Greek chiton, and the infant decorated with a pair of wings.

'How is this?' he asked. 'Was it not to be a group of mother and child?'

'I modelled them from nature,' answered the old sculptor—'but I could not leave them so.'

'And why not?'

'Well, you see, the mother and child were very well in their way; but they wouldn't have been a work

of art. So I draped the woman as a nymph, after the antique, and turned the boy into a Cupid. *That makes it a work of art.* Eros and Euphrosyne, I call it now.'

The introduction of this pseudo-classic element was not confined to marble or to canvas in the last century. It characterised the poet's work as well. A man could not write a set of verses on the most ordinary subject without beginning by an invocation to the Muses. He was always bidding his lyre to 'awake,' or calling upon some imaginary goddess to 'inspire his lays.' Of what sort the inspiration was, those who are familiar with the heroic couplets of that period can best determine. The very language employed is full of sickly sentiment and hacknied similes—of allusions to Greek pastoral, and Roman theology, as if there was no scenery out of Arcadia, and no poetry in religion since the death of Tiberius. Every shepherd is called a 'swain.' Every milkmaid becomes a 'nymph.' Ploughman Hodge takes 'Corydon' as his *nom de guerre*. Master Chawbacon is rechristened 'Alexis.' And as these 'am'rous youths' must necessarily be provided with sweethearts, a host of fine ladies await their wooing in 'flowery meads' and 'mossy bowers,' as if love-making were one of the most serious duties of a shepherd's life. Daphne, Chloe, Belinda, Clariissa, Celia, Delia—heroines of a golden age—for whom so many gallant youth contended; who were in the habit of transfixing lovers with a glance, or ruthlessly leaving your rivals to fill the evening air with 'fruitless plaints,'—where are ye now? Who is Sylvia? Was there ever a time when she was declared incomparably superior to any other of her sex upon the dull earth dwelling? Is any gentleman prepared to aver that Phyllis is his only joy, for no better reason than because she is faithless as the winds or seas? These are figurative expressions which held good in the romantic days of the Renaissance, but sound queerly in our dull, prosaic ear.

When the author of 'The Seasons' wishes to describe a sunset, he tells

us that Apollo's weary chariot seeks the bowers of Amphitrite. By-and-by, 'Evening yields the world to night; not in her winter robe of Stygian woof, but loose arrayed,' &c. Gray alludes to adversity, not as the work of a spirit of evil, but as a personage whom he calls the daughter of Jove.

It was the way with all these bards to don the toga of a sham Augustan age; to deck their venerable night-capped heads with imaginary chaplets; to raise ideal altars to Apollo; to pour out libations to Bacchus in theory, while they were actually boozing themselves. It was the remnant of an ancient superstition, which no one believed in but which everybody affected. With Dryden and Pope it was pedantry: with their later imitators it became nonsense. It was William Cowper who first abandoned the silly fashion of the day, and taught English poets to look to their own age and country for inspiration. Instead of composing odes to Venus, or eclogues for Cordelia and Smininda, the honest rhymer sets his mother's portrait before him, and celebrates it in sweet and simple verse, which will long be remembered when the stilted distichs of his predecessors are forgotten. Instead of hobbling over the pasteboard Parnassus which they had raised, he sat down by the banks of the Ouse, and found that retreat not only more to his taste, but infinitely more suggestive of romance than the likeness of any mountain Phocis.

Crabbe followed up the good cause, and boldly put the 'poetic fallacy' in its true light. It must have startled some of the old poetsasters of his day to read such lines as these:—

'First are those times when in harmonious strains  
The rustic poet praised his native plains.  
No shepherds now, in smooth alternate verse,  
Their country's beauty or their nymph's re-  
bears:

Yet still for these we frame the tender strain;  
Still in our lays fond Corydons complain,  
And shepherds' boys their amorous pains reveal—  
The only pains, alas! they never feel.  
On Mincio's banks, in Cesar's bounteous reign,  
If Tityrus found the golden age again,  
Must sleepy bards the flattering dream prolong,  
Mechanic echoes of the Mantuan song?  
From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,  
Where Virgil, not where fancy, leads the way?

Truth and nature were not long neglected after this. The tide of public taste began to change, and soon set in an opposite direction. Men began to feel that it was one thing for a poet to summon the aid of *Clio*, but another to receive her inspiration. The modern Pegasus had proved to be no better than a hobby-horse. Instead of soaring to the celestial regions, it had been ridden to death on earth, not before all were tired of its dull and measured trot. A new race of poets arose, whose muse was earthly indeed in her form, but infinitely more spiritual in her nature than the shadowy nine whom it had been the fashion to invoke. Scott, Wordsworth, Byron, Moore, struck off, link by link, the chains which fettered the old school. But it remained for Alfred Tennyson to brush away the last remnants of quasi-classic conventionalism, and to exchange for manly English verse the mock-heroic language and metre of the eighteenth century.

It seems difficult at first to distinguish between customs and proprieties—the mode and the manner of the day, but, in reality, these are far from identical. Fashion may be, and often is, regulated to some extent by taste, but conventionalism does not enter the field of æsthetics at all. It is simply the doing what everybody does for no better reason than because every one does it. For instance, we have two distinct sorts of dress; one rigid, formal, and uncomfortable, for town wear, the other easy, serviceable, and comparatively picturesque, for rural life. Both are recognized by society at large; both are worn on certain occasions and in certain places with confessed propriety. But a coat or hat which is considered perfectly orthodox a few miles out of London, would become, in the opinion of Mrs. Grundy, eccentric, and even plebeian, in Regent Street; and, in short, as the world goes, a man may step into a train as a gentleman, and get out of it, at the end of an hour's ride, like a snob. It is hardly possible to over-estimate the loss which a man of any standing would sustain in the eyes of his friends by being seen at

the West End with anything but a 'chimney-pot' on his head. In the year 1851, when everyone hoped and believed that that abominable invention would be discarded, I remember having a long discussion with a hatter on the probabilities of its becoming extinct. He differed from the then prevailing opinion, which I shared, and he has proved a true prophet. He admitted that it was ugly, uncomfortable, useless, and so forth. We had exhausted every epithet in its abuse, when he suddenly stopped, and said—

'But, after all, sir, *nothing looks so gentlemanlike.*'

In that short argument lie the *fons et origo* of half the conventionalities of life. Everybody is afraid of differing from his neighbour, and his neighbour holds that what everybody does must be right.

It is curious to notice how long some social traditions have survived the cause of their original observance. In letter-writing, for instance, the expressions of affection used at the beginning and end of an epistle had a meaning when travelling was rare, and the correspondents were separated by long and tedious journeys from each other. But now, when a few hours' notice will bring together friends from any part of England, and the penny post may insure a letter every morning, we still continue to use the initiatory endearment and end by expressing our regard for people whom we are in the daily habit of seeing. Some of these phrases are curious in themselves. A man will write 'my dearest' to each of his sisters in turn, and will even apply that epithet to his mother, which, considered in a grammatical sense, is absurd. No one would think of beginning a letter with 'my very dear mother;' yet that is literally the only form in which the superlative can be correctly used for such an address. The higher we go in the scale of epistolary respect, the less tender we become. 'Dear sir' is more respectful than 'my dear sir,' but 'sir' is the most deferential form of the three. By a curious paradox, too, the humblest tone which we can adopt in a letter is

conventionally accepted as the most severe. 'Yours obediently' is an ordinary business-like mode of signature. 'Your obedient servant' would be considered distant. But when Mr. Jones enters upon an angry correspondence with his neighbour, Brown, and wishes to express the contempt which he has for that gentleman's conduct, he actually implies that he esteems it an 'honour' to be Mr. Brown's 'most obedient and humble servant.'

Notes in the third person were probably first written by secretaries, in the name of those who employed them, and who were thus saved the trouble of an autographic communication. Now-a-days, your laundress adopts the *style signorile* in her correspondence with as grand an air as if a real *amannensis* was writing from her dictation on the other side of the wash-tub.

'Mrs. Mangles present her respect to Mr. Blank, and begs to Say that Mr. B's complaint about his Lining shall be attend to without fail lower Goffering place friday 3d february 186—.'

Have we not all, in the course of bachelorhood, received some such little missive as the above, and laughed over the contents? Bating the orthography, and, *ceteris paribus*, it is hardly more absurd than the formal invitations which the ladies of Belgravia or Mayfair send to each other. Why this austerity of language should be used towards our friends precisely when we offer them hospitality, rather than on other occasions, is a little puzzling. Some say it is to save time, but

'DEAR MRS. JONES,

Will you and your husband give us the pleasure of your company at dinner on the 23rd inst, at 7, takes no longer to write than

'Mr. and Mrs. Brown request the pleasure of Mr. and Mrs. Jones's company at dinner on Thursday, the 23rd inst., at 7 o'clock.'

And so there is not much in that argument. The truth is, it is a custom which has crept in—no one knows how—but having taken root, has become an article in our social

creed which no one ventures to doubt.

The conventionalities of life are nowhere more striking than in the intercourse of what are called the middle ranks of society. That portion of the community (and women especially) would seem to be haunted by a perpetual dread of individuality. Accordingly, a host of venerable absurdities are perpetuated at dinner-parties and those exotically-titled entertainments known as *soirées* and *conversations*, which we all agree in condemning, but which are, nevertheless, observed with great punctilio. From the moment when the footman (or disguised greengrocer, as the case may be) opens the hall door, to the period when the last wax candle is extinguished, what a host of little useless rites, of unmeaning proprieties, of idle posturing, one has to encounter! The very smile with which our hostess greets us, the vapid, anti-prandial remarks about the weather, &c., the solemn manner in which we pair off to the dining-room, are stereotyped incidents of a ceremony as precise, as imposing, and as ludicrous in the abstract as those of a Sybarite banquet, or a war-feast in Feejee. The dinner itself is a wonderfully methodical institution. I suppose no gastronomist of any repute would think of asking why soup should come before fish, or fish precede the entrées (albeit that particular succession did not always obtain in merry England, nor does it now in many parts of Europe); but what ingenious epicure first decreed that we should eat sweet jelly with roast mutton, and sour capers with boiled? oysters with cod-fish, and cucumber with salmon? What would be thought of a rash youth who should venture to ask for a second helping of mulligatawny, or send back his plate for a relay of whitebait? In the last century claret was considered an admirable accompaniment to salmon, puddings came on in the middle of dinner, and the fashionable hour for that repast was three o'clock.

'Tempora dispenant usus, et tempora culina.'

It is Time which has modified that ancient *régime*, which has refined our tastes in matters culinary, restrained our midday appetites, and taught us to dine when our ancestors would have supped. They say that Custom is a second Nature, and assuredly we soon accommodate ourselves to its influence. As the world jogs on, new theories arise on the question of manners, of social comfort, of what we should eat, drink, or avoid. We flatter ourselves that these domestic by-laws are enduring—that they resemble those of the Medes and Persians, which altered not. The fact is that they are continually altering—now for better, now for worse: sometimes becoming over stringent, at others erring on the side of laxity. Our notions of what is and what is not good breeding are but relative. The lapse of half a century makes all the difference in ideal character, as far as superficial qualifications, at least, are concerned. A gentleman of the seventeenth century becomes a fogey in the eighteenth, and would be positively unbearable in our present homes. Those starched and staid old ladies in Jacobean dress, whose demure appearance commands our respect on the painter's canvas, indulged in conversation and cracked jokes among their families, which would shock the ears of modern belles. What was harmless pleasantry in that age becomes coarse ribaldry in this; and it is difficult to say whether, fifty years hence, polite language may include much of what is now called slang, or reject as vulgar the 'sensation' English of our own day. No doubt it was with the intention of avoiding the commonplaces of ordinary parlance that many hyperbolic expressions in present use were first adopted; but even these are so soon caught up and circulated, that they become hacknied in their turn, and are replaced by others of a still more exaggerated form. Thus, in the early part of this century, the word 'vastly' was used as an intensive adverb, in place of 'very': 'vastly fine, vastly well, vastly amusing,' were common phrases of the day. This was suc-

ceeded by 'monstrous,' and it was not at all an uncommon thing to hear a man spoken of as monstrous clever, a book as monstrous amusing, and so forth. Indeed, dandies of the period, utterly regardless of the absurdity of such an epithet, would call the reigning belle a 'monstrous pretty girl.' In like manner, the rising generation employ some very remarkable adjectives to express their approbation. A good-natured man is described as a 'stunning brick'; a pleasant ball becomes an 'awfully jolly hop'; (fancy an entertainment being jolly and awful at the same time!) an evening party is facetiously known as a 'tea-fight' or 'muffin-struggle.' 'Busting,' 'fizzing,' 'screaming,' and 'scrumptious,' are epithets which, if not universally popular, are well known to public-school and University men. I have even heard a young lady (with a brother at college) go so far as to allude to dinner under the bold but significant synonym of a 'blow out'; but this, I admit, is an exceptional case. Indeed, the use of this idiomatic language is regulated by certain conventionalities which it seems impossible to explain, but which are, nevertheless, observed with due regard for time and place. The vocabulary of slang is a republic, and not an anarchy; yet no one knows on what principle it is governed. Some words quickly fall into disuse, or are voted snobbish; others, of equally humble origin, presently become popular and last for years. A single instance of public caprice on this point will suffice. The expressions of 'muff' and 'chap' have both existed about a quarter of a century. Their etymology is doubtful, and, as far as propriety of speech is concerned, they are about on a par. Yet, while the first still continues to be adopted by gentlemen, the latter is abandoned to footmen and shop-boys. Every one who has been brought up at a public school knows what is meant by a 'muff,' but woe betide the wretched freshman who talks of a 'rum chap' at Eton or Westminster!

What shall we say of the conventionalities of pronunciation, and the



mysterious caprice which regulates the value of our British vowels and consonants? In the primers and horn-books of infant life, D, O, G, has spelt dog from time immemorial. But the dandies of the Restoration called that intelligent little quadruped a '*dag*,' and the dandies of our own time call it a '*dawg*.' Much commiseration has been felt for the 'poor letter H,' and the neglect with which it has been treated in cockney dialect. But the letter R is worse off, for its use is being gradually abandoned in those quarters where the purity of the Queen's English is supposed to be most scrupulously preserved. As an initial, it was once the fashion to pronounce it as a W; and indeed it was only the other day, that I heard a man speaking of some ridiculous ewwor which had swept into a celebrated drama, and remained there long after it had been witten, wead, wepeated, and wehearsed. This was an affectation which came in with Lytton Bulwer and departed with Thackeray. There are few, even of our youngest exquisites, who venture to speak in such accents now. But the R is, nevertheless, slurred over and even omitted by many, who would scout the idea of imitating a natural defect of speech. What has become, for instance, of the final consonant in the word 'father?' In west country dialect it is still preserved, but in polite circles it is pronounced *fatha*; never, *nevah*, and so forth. Half a century ago, the letter A was similarly misused. Old gentlemen still exist who speak of St. James's Street and the Peletinete. E and I changed their places. 'Arithmetic' was called '*arethmetic*,' and 'messenger' became '*missinger*.' To this day Lord Russell declares that he is *obleeged*, and it is a curious proof how extremes meet, that the same expression is adopted by the humblest labourer in Devonshire. The truth is, that when the word was originally borrowed from the French, every one called it '*obleeged*,' and this provincialism, like many others of the same class, is nothing more than the old-fashioned talk of our forefathers.

That our pronunciation, not only of English, but of foreign languages, has materially altered with this generation, there can be little doubt. The other day I met with an old book of French phrases, in which the ingenious author had endeavoured to convey a sort of phonetic equivalent of their sound to British ears. Thus we were told that '*embonpoint*' should be pronounced '*ang-bong-pwang*,' '*chef-d'œuvre*,' as '*she-doo-ver*,' '*tout ensemble*,' as '*tú-tang-sam'ble*,' &c. Fancy our adhering to such a system now, and the surprise with which Frenchmen would hear such a sentence as, 'Beeang, je reveeangdray demang mattang!'

People of education are scrupulous in calling Berkeley Square Barkley Square, the Derby Day the Darby, and so forth. In the main they are right, for these words are proper names, and should be, of course, pronounced as their owners pronounce them. But it must be remembered that the corruption of names is only due to a fleeting fashion, which another generation may ignore. Thus, while 'Majoribanks' remains 'Marchbanks,' and Cholmondeley Chumley, Cavendish, which was once called Candish, has returned to its original length.

*Apropos*—What was the original length of this article, as at first designed? I imagined that I had but a few words to say on my subject, and, lo! they have already filled a dozen pages, before the theme is half exhausted! I should like to have drawn attention to some literary conventionalities, and to the venerable traditions observed by modern journalists in their narration of incident or in the field of criticism. I might have dilated on the horrors of shopping, and selected a few examples of trade slang and counter-etiquette, for the amusement of my readers. But there is a conventional limit even to the description of Conventionalism; and having now reached the average amount of 'copy' permitted for articles in this journal, I draw my pen modestly through what remains.

JACK EARLE.



## SCENES IN COURT.

## CHAPTER II.



AND yet he seemed besier than he was,' wrote Dan Chaucer five centuries ago, when describing the Man of Laws in the 'Canterbury Tales;' and such was the reflection which crossed my mind as I saw P—, of whom we know somewhat already, rush in great haste from his lodgings in the High Street to the court-house, at Brisk, one fine summer morning, a few circuits back. He was armed for the fight—a fight more in the fashion of Ulysses than

of Ajax—and bore, besides the brief with which he had been trusted, two massy books of authority to back up his intended statements. He passed on, and I finished my pipe; for, though the advice of the great Q.C. who had instructed me many times in the way wherein I should walk, had been that, business or no business, it behoved me to show in court regularly at nine o'clock every morning, when the Court sat—and this advice was, be-

yond question, wholesome—yet had I found it to be, like many other wholesome things, very unpalatable. I gave the ‘no business’ side of the advice a fair trial, and small was the apparent advantage derived from it; the ‘business’ side would have met with equal justice, had it thought fit ever to present itself. Six circuits were enough for the proof of half the advice; and as, at the tail of the seventh, ‘business’ did not surrender to take its trial, I thought it small harm to do as I liked in the matter; hence it was that, on this particular morning, I stayed to finish my pipe instead of rushing eagerly, as P— was doing, to the dispensary for justice. I took my own time about bringing into subjection to the brush the hair which stood out after my morning’s dip in the river ‘like quills upon the fretful porcupine;’ I donned my robes and wig at my own pace; and, as I thought of P— with his brief, and his books, and his haste (on my honour there was no hint of envy, though P— was but on his second circuit), the words of old Chaucer occurred to me as apposite, and—for I liked P— greatly—by the time my toilette was over, I had got as far as heartily to wish that Chaucer’s preceding line might be equally applicable,

‘No wher so busy a man as he there n’as.’

And then I, too, walked over to the court-house, down the narrow street and down the hill.

A heap of folk were about the doorway—attorneys’ clerks, barristers’ clerks, witnesses, and lookers-on. I passed through; and, all the world being my way, it made no difference whether I went into the Crown Court or the Civil Court, so I turned into the former, and made my way to a place.

The dock was rather thickly tenanted; and, as I entered the court, a miserable-looking lad was standing in front of this pen, awaiting the beginning of the prosecution, which charged him with ‘feloniously and unlawfully stealing,’ &c. He had, in truth, been guilty of neglect rather than crime; but had, unfor-

tunately, been brought before some stern moralists of magistrates, who took the uglier view of his case and sent him for trial; he was undefended by counsel, and was called upon to say if he was guilty or not guilty to the charges made against him.

‘Not guilty!’ said the boy in a low voice; and the counsel for the prosecution began.

In cases where the prisoner is undefended, it is not usual for the prosecution to make any speech, properly so called. The case is stated to the jury; the witnesses are called and examined from the depositions; and then the whole is summed up and laid before the jury, the prisoner being allowed to make his own defence after the case for the prosecution is closed. But on this occasion the counsel for the prosecution was about as new to his work as the prisoner was to crime; and, without intending to injure the poor lad against whom he appeared, but in pure ignorance of what was right, he commenced an oration which was evidently not the inspiration of the moment, but a studied speech, which had had more than one rehearsal.

‘The magnitude of the crime with which the prisoner stands charged is such as to demand the promptest attention, and the most summary repression. Our homes, our property—I might add, our lives—are—’

‘Really, sir, this course is very unusual,’ said the judge, interrupting the flow of the advocate’s words.

The prosecutor did not see in what way the course was unusual, and, in complete innocence, harked back upon the initial words of the speech—‘The magnitude of the crime—’

‘Really, sir, I must interrupt you,’ said his lordship; ‘you would do better to proceed with a simple statement of facts.’ And, with much show of unwillingness—for the learned counsel, who was from ‘the green isle,’ was, like most of his countrymen, a really ‘good fist’ at a speech, and disliked missing an opportunity of making one—the

prosecutor continued on his way, stating the facts simply and calling the witness.

The first witness was a labourer, who had seen the prisoner with the 'feloniously stolen' article in his possession (the lad had been told to take a spade to A——, but had carried it only to his own father's house, where he had mislaid and forgotten it).

'Were you on the road leading to A—— on the morning of the 3rd July?'

'Yes.'

'Did you meet anyone?'

'Yes; the prisoner.'

'Had he anything with him?'

'A spade.'

'Was it this spade?' (producing one).

'It was.'

'Did you know whose spade it was?'

'I knew it belonged to Master Turner, up to Wurnley.'

'Did you say anything to the prisoner about the spade?'

'I said, "You young rascal, you've stolen that spade!"'

'What made you say that?'

'I knew he must ha' stolen it.'

'No other reason?'

'No.'

'Then if you knew he must ha' stolen it, why did you not tell a policeman?'

'Don't know.'

'Did you not see any policeman?'

'Yes.'

'Why did you not tell him?'

'Don't know.'

But the counsel pressed the witness on this point, and at length succeeded in getting an answer.

'Why did you not tell him, sir? Answer the question.'

'Well,' said the man, 'I certainly did see a policeman, but he was only a b—— big fool of an Irishman, and I knew it was no use to tell him.'

Poor J—— looked a little discomfited at this reply; and, in answer to his lordship's inquiry, said he had no further questions to put to the witness, who stood down, and the case went on to an acquittal of the prisoner.

Then came the trial of a man for forgery, a conviction, and the sentence. The man was an old offender in the same direction; and his lordship thought fit to pass upon him 'a substantial sentence,' as he called it, out of regard to the peculiar hatefulness of the crime, and to the fact that the prisoner had been tried before. I mention this case not merely because it followed that of which I have just written, but because of the peculiarly sad effect which the sentence had upon one quite other than the prisoner.

A nervous movement of the hands, and a slight twitching of the mouth, alone had betrayed the keen interest the prisoner took in the proceedings which so intimately concerned him. When the clerk of arraigns asked the jury if they were agreed upon their verdict, a wistful look, which seemed to indicate a desire to anticipate the sentence, was turned upon them; and when the clerk further asked them if they found the prisoner 'guilty' or 'not guilty,' a painful anxiety showed in the forger's face, and communicated itself to the bystanders: and when the word 'Guilty' dropped from the foreman's lips, a sense of relief came upon all who heard it.

His lordship—than whom was no judge more ready to make allowance for the infirmities of poor human nature—considered of the sentence he should pronounce, and felt it his duty to give, as he said, a substantial one. Addressing a few remarks to the better feelings of the prisoner, he told him how grieved he was to see him continue in his former evil way; that as he had, however, chosen to do so, it behoved the law to protect people from his knavery; and the sentence of the Court was that he be kept in penal servitude for four years.

As soon as the words 'penal servitude for four years' closed the sentence which the judge pronounced, a shriek was uttered in the far-end of the court, which pierced the ears of everyone. A woman had fainted; some poor creature to whom even the wretched man in the dock was dear, and upon whom the sentence, double-edged, fell with the sharper

side upon her. The man was removed by the 'dungeon villains' (two eminently mild and kindly-looking men, by the way), and the friends of the poor soul, whose sobs seemed to strain her very heart-strings, gathered her up and bore her out.

Now, it may be womanish, but bother me if 'a scene in court like this is at all to my liking. I hate to be agitated whether I like it or not; to feel the apple in my throat swell and get inconvenient, as though it were the 'prime' apple which caused our first mother to err; to feel warm and glowing about the eyes, and, will I nill I, to be obliged to smother my emotion by blowing tunelessly on my nose. And these things had to be endured on this occasion, in spite of the philosophy of a youthful attorney who stood by, and said, with desire to be overheard, 'that such things must happen, and the police ought to see that these *women* were kept out of court.' To be sure I knew nothing of the people; and, for aught I *did* know, they might be the wickedest and least deserving of sympathy in the whole world. So far as the trial itself went, there was nothing particular to set the feelings in play: had the mere facts of the crime been proved as stated, the prisoner found guilty, and sentenced in the ordinary way, I do not suppose for an instant that anyone would have been unusually struck by the sentence. But the little something not usual—the extraordinary addition of a woman's cry of sorrow; that woman having nothing visibly to connect her with the case before the Court; and the sign which that cry gave of links and sympathies outraged, of which the Court could take no cognizance,—these were the springs of an emotion which none but the assize-hardened do not feel—the one touch of nature which makes the whole world kin.'

Professing the stoic philosophy, I dislike occasions which make me show my feelings as a man. The 'one touch of nature' I admire in the abstract, and in Shakespeare, from whom the expression is stolen,

but do not desire to be the subject of it in my own person. Lest nature should touch me again, I left the Crown Court, and walked over to the Civil side, where Justice—was trying the special jury cases, and where, amidst the lookers-on, I saw my landlord, with eyes in which pity mingled with contempt as he looked on me, robed, but sans brief. A moment's reflection told me that he would charge me no less for the numerous 'extras' which were certain to appear in my bill, pitiful though his glance might now be; so I placed my eyeglass (not that I am shortsighted, you know, reader) firmly into my eye-socket, assumed a haughty air, which was intended to hurl back the landlord's pity with scorn, and addressed myself to attending to the speeches that were being made.

It was evident from the experience just narrated, that, though I might have the bad digestion, I did not possess 'the hard heart' which is said to be as necessary for a good lawyer, as a gold latch-key has been held to be to an officer in the Horse Guards. I may improve, however, as time goes on.

P—, of whom mention was made just now, was about to open the pleadings in a case that had been called on, when O—, breathless and anxious, rushed in from the Crown Court, where he was engaged in a case requiring fullest attention, having heard that this cause, in which he was also retained for the defendant, had been called. His object was to get the case postponed till he could attend to it; and had he been other than he was, or had he not placed temptation right in his lordship's way, he might have got what he wanted. But he was who he was, a great drawer of the longbow; one known to all the profession for the entirety in which he adopted M. Talleyrand's saying, that speech was given to man to conceal his thoughts: he was this; and, being this, he tempted the Court beyond its power to bear.

Hurrying up to the counsel's table, he motioned to P— to refrain from opening, and begged his lordship to put off the case,

'for,' said he, 'I am *this moment* speaking in the Crown Court.'

His lordship's eye twinkled; the bar noticed the mess poor O— was in; and O— himself was aware of his mistake as soon as he had made it. Time was not given him to amend, for his lordship repeating the words, 'this moment speaking in the Crown Court,' added with an arch smile, which was well understood by all who saw it, 'No, no, Mr. O—, I can't believe *that*.'

O— knew what fame was his, and the bar knew, and the judge knew; and if the public who looked on knew not, I take this opportunity of hinting at it, for the express purpose of showing them that if their vulgar and calumnious riddle about lawyers being such restless people, because they first lie on this side and then on that, and lie even in their graves—a riddle feloniously stolen, by the way, from a *bon mot* of Sir Christopher Hatton's, when he was Lord Chancellor—be founded on fact, the professional brethren of these restless men take good care they shall not forget their characteristics. For the riddle I ever thought the properest answer was, that lawyers are restless because they never lie at all; but even if I could make my meaning clear upon this head, as an able writer in a magazine some time ago did his, in an article called 'The Morality of Advocacy,' there would be no end of people to join issue with me; so I give up the attempt to alter the riddle and its answer, deeming the game not worth the candle.

O—'s application was granted, as P— and his learned friends did not object, and O— went back in peace to his defence of 'bigamus.' The next cause was called, and at the name of it, a young man of temperament the most nervous in the world, a quality which made the bar an almost insuperable bar to him, rose to his feet, and announced that he appeared for the defendant. Counsel for the plaintiff opened, called his witnesses, and closed his case, which seemed to be a winning one. Counsel for the defendant rose, blushed to the very roots—I had almost written tops—of his

wig, looked like the incarnation of confusion, and thus delivered:—

'My lord, and gentlemen of the jury; my client in this case—my client, gentlemen—my client, my lord—my client;' and at this stage the poor man seemed perfectly overcome by the natural enemy with which he was combating. His mouth was as if paralysis had stricken it, his lips were parched, his glance wandered about the court, his tongue stammered, and then wagged no more. The Court waited; some men pitied the poor creature stuck in the slough of words, unable to get free; others enjoyed the joke and grinned unkindly grins. The occasion was too much also for his lordship, who leaned forward a little, and said, in a tone of voice which with other words might have been taken for encouraging, 'Pray, sir, proceed; thus far the Court is with you.'

The nervous man was stung to the quick, and like a stag pursued to a corner, turned round and stood fiercely at bay. He floundered on in spite of himself, and was getting fairly under way, to the relief of everyone who heard him, when in an unfortunate moment he allowed his eloquence to hurry him into a false quantity, and then he was in the toils again. There is a writ called of '*quare impedit*' the *e* whereof in '*impedit*,' is short. By pure misfortune—for the nervous man 'was a scholar, and a ripe and good one'—by pure misfortune, and the hurry he was in, he gave this word as though the *e* were long, and called the writ one of '*quare impedit*.'

The sharp ear of the judge detected the false concord, and before the speaker could correct for himself, was down upon him like a Nasmyth's hammer. 'Pray shorten your speech, sir. Remember we have a good deal to get through.' The blow was a fair one, though it fell heavily upon Mr. T—, who continued to speak like one grown desperate, reminding one of the bull in a Spanish arena when the red flags and the darts have been plied some time. He plunged on here and there through the case,

butting, but not bellowing at his antagonist, who did for him the service of a matador, and gave him the *coup de grâce*, to the poor fellow's utter discomfiture.

The said antagonist rose to reply, and as a boa constrictor licks and fondles his prey before he devours it, so the antagonist bespattered Mr. T—— with praise, and complimented him upon 'his thrilling and powerful appeal.' 'The Lord hath delivered him into my hands,' was the profane aside, however, with which the advocate forecast to those nearest him, the issue of the fight. The speaker went on and proceeded to dissect the speech of his opponent, and, metaphorically speaking, the speech maker himself. He exposed the fallacies, turned the facts so as to show the reverse side of them, and drew a deduction from his learned friend's own premises, so diametrically opposite to that which had been drawn by him, that Mr. T——, though he did not interrupt by speaking, could not refrain from showing his dissent by violent shaking of the head.

'My learned friend on the other side shakes his head,' said the speaker, raising his voice, and emphasizing the word 'head.' 'I don't know that there's much in that;' and at this neither pity nor decorum could keep the bystanders within bounds; a laugh, general and hearty, was raised at the expense of poor Mr. T——, who, painfully alive to the wound which had been inflicted, gesticulated in vain endeavour to get a hearing for something which *might* have hurled his enemy to the ground; but the possibility got thrown away; Mr. T—— remained crushed, though exceedingly angry.

Now it happens that the courthouse at the assize town of Brisk is inconveniently near to the market, which is the resort of farmers for miles round. Thither come cattle, sheep, and beasts of burden; and thither are taken grain, and hay, and all kinds of agricultural produce. The place is so near to the courts of law, that the sounds of marketing, the grunts of pigs, and the noise of blatant beasts, have

many times been known to pierce the sanctum of justice, and to interfere with the delivery of grave human utterances. On this occasion, when Mr. T—— came so grievously to grief, high market was going on in the street and place outside. Animals of various kinds had given audible proof of their presence, and just as the vanquisher of Mr. T—— resumed his speech, a jackass, desirous of showing his sense of the learned gentleman's sharp wit, set up a bray sufficiently loud to be heard right through the court.

It was his lordship's turn now, and he, thinking perhaps that so keen a tonguesman as he who was speaking could look well enough to himself, to be able to bear a rub down, said, with a good-humoured smile, which was the salve to his blow, 'One at a time, brother; one at a time.'

The serjeant reddened slightly, and merely nodded assent to his lordship's proposition. The laugh was against the serjeant, but 'nothing he reck'd,' or seemed to do, and went on to the close of his speech.

His lordship began to sum up the case to the jury, sifting the facts, and laying down the law. He had not proceeded very far, when the animal aforesaid, instigated, no doubt, by a feeling of kindness for the serjeant, took advantage of a slight pause in the summing up, to testify once more to its appreciation of English jurisprudence. The loud *hee-haw!* resounded through the court, attracting the attention, if not the fears of the judge. Respect for the bench precluded any such notice by the bar, as the bench had taken of the former bray; but his lordship had flung down his glove to the serjeant, and the serjeant was not the man to refuse the gage. He followed his own plan in taking it up. When the judge continued his address to the jury, the impression created by the jackass being yet fresh upon the audience, Serjeant —— turned him around to the leader who sat next him, and said in a stage whisper, heard distinctly by every one, 'I never noticed till



now the remarkable echo in this court.'

'Not even with your long ears,' said a junior in a whisper as audible as the last remark, whereby the laugh which began to rise at his lordship's expense, was shifted back again to the serjeant, who strove between his dignity—which would not let him notice the junior so immeasurably beneath him—and his anger, which made his fingers itch to punch the junior's head. The serjeant was a wrathful man, and had the reputation of even 'swearing his prayers.' Forth from his mouth flowed a string of muttered curses, like lava from a volcano that cannot burst in open fury; and to judge from appearances a breach of the peace seemed not unlikely to occur at a later hour in the day; though, as far as I know, none actually took place, the serjeant, a thoroughly good fellow, having been observed to select his youthful adversary for special attention at the mess on that very same day; and ever after speaking highly of him as a foeman worthy of his own steel. He recognized an equal, as Lord Thurlow did when the usher of the court gave back his lordship's '—damn you,' after enduring meekly and in patience for the space of five minutes a long string of invectives, hurled at him because the

Lord Chancellor's inkstand was not filled.

P——'s case came on in due course, and P—— fleshed his maiden sword right valiantly. He bore up against the excessive respect of his own witness, who insisted on calling him 'my lord,' drawing upon him a flood of congratulations from his brethren, and a remark from his lordship that 'the witness was only anticipating.' O—— strove and did mightily; and the jury gave right between them—at least I trust so, for I cannot speak out of my own knowledge. The heat of the weather and the stuffiness of the court, combined, with the want of special interest in any one of the causes, to make the assize court of Brisk, in the county of ——, intolerable by four o'clock in the afternoon. The only piece of paper I had touched for the day in the way of business, was the messman's dinner-list, whereon I had inscribed my name. It was useless to wait, I thought, so nudging R——, my fellow in lodgings, and mine own peculiar friend, I left the court for more refreshing haunts. I strode away, and in company with R——, who 'rowed in the same boat' with myself, sought upon the waters of the Cray an appetite for the dinner we were to eat at half-past six.



## THE MYSTERY OF THE BLOODY HAND.

## CHAPTER III.—THE TIME OF TRIAL.

MEANWHILE he was waiting for my answer. I stepped forward, intending to take his hand, but the stains drove me back again. Where so much depends upon a right—or a misunderstanding, the only way is to speak the fair truth. I did so; by a sort of forced calm holding back the seething of my brain.

‘George, I should like to touch you, but—I cannot! I beg you to forgive the selfishness of my grief—my mind is confused—I shall be better soon. God has sent us a great sorrow, in which I know you are as innocent as I am. I am very sorry—I think that is all.’ And I put my hand to my head, where a sharp pain was beginning to throb. Mr. Manners spoke emphatically—

‘God bless you, Doralice! You know I promised. Thank you, for ever!’

‘If you fancy you have any reason to thank me,’ I said, ‘do me this favour. Whatever happens, believe that I believe!’

I could bear no more, so I went out of the kitchen. As I went I heard a murmur of pity run through the room, and I knew that they were pitying—not the dead man, but me; and me—not for my dead brother, but for his murderer. When I got into the passage, the mist that had still been dark before my eyes suddenly became darker, and I remember no more.

When my senses returned, Harriet had come home. From the first she would never hear George’s name, except to accuse him with frantic bitterness of poor Edmund’s death; and as nothing would induce me to credit his guilt, the subject was as much as possible avoided. I cannot dwell on those terrible days. I was very ill for some time, and after I had come down stairs, one day I found a newspaper containing the following paragraph, which I copy here, as it is the shortest and least painful way of telling you the facts of poor Edmund’s death.

## ‘THE MURDER AT CROSSEDALE HALL.

‘Universal horror has been excited in the neighbourhood by the murder of Edmund Lascelles, Esq., of Crossdale Hall. Mr. Lascelles was last seen alive a little after ten o’clock on Friday night, at which time he left the house alone, and was not seen again living. At the inquest on Saturday, James Crosby, a farm labourer, gave the following evidence:—

“I had been sent into the village for some medicine for a sick beast, and was returning to the farm by the park a little before eleven, when near the low gate I saw a man standing with his back to me. The moon was shining, and I recognized him at once for Mr. George Manners, of Beckfield. When Mr. Manners saw me he seemed much excited, and called out, ‘Quick! help! Mr. Lascelles has been murdered.’ I said, ‘Good God! who did it?’ He said, ‘I don’t know; I found him in the ditch; help me to carry him in.’ By this time I had come up and saw Mr. Lascelles on the ground, lying on his side. I said, ‘How do you know he’s dead?’ He said, ‘I fear there’s very little hope; he has bled so profusely. I am covered with blood.’ I was examining the body, and as I turned it over I found that the right hand was gone. It had been cut off at the wrist. I said, ‘Look here! Did you know this?’ He spoke very low, and only said, ‘How horrible!’ I said, ‘Let us look for the hand; it may be in the ditch.’ He said, ‘No, no! we are wasting time. Bring him in, and let us send for the doctor.’ I ran to the ditch, however, but could see nothing but a pool of blood. Coming back, I found on the ground a thick hedge-stake covered with blood. The grass by the ditch was very much stamped and trodden. I said, ‘There has been a desperate struggle.’ He said, ‘Mr. Lascelles was a very strong man.’ I said, ‘Yes; as strong as you, Mr. Manners.’

He said, 'Not quite; very nearly though.' He said nothing more till we got to the hall; then he said, 'Who can break it to his sister?' I said, 'They will have to know. It's them that killed him has brought this misery upon them.' The low gate is a quarter of a mile, or more, from the hall."

'Death seems to have been inflicted by two instruments—a wounding and a cutting one. As yet, no other weapon but the stake has been discovered, and a strict search for the missing hand has also proved fruitless. No motive for this wanton outrage suggests itself, except that the unhappy gentleman was in the habit of wearing on his right hand a sapphire ring of great value. (An heir-loom; it is on my finger as I write, dear Nell. Oh! my poor boy.) 'All curiosity is astir to discover the perpetrator of this horrible deed; and it is with the deepest regret that we are obliged to state that every fresh link in the chain of evidence points with fatal accuracy to one, whose position, character, and universal popularity would seem to place him above suspicion. We would not willingly intrude upon the privacy of domestic interests, but the following facts will too soon be matters of public notoriety.

'A younger sister of the deceased appears to have formed a matrimonial engagement with George Manners, Esq., of Beckfield. It was strongly opposed by Mr. Lascelles, and the objection (which at the time appeared unreasonable) may have been founded on a more intimate knowledge of the suitor's character than was then possessed by others. The match was broken off, and all intercourse was suspended till the night of the murder, when Mr. Manners gained admittance to the hall in the absence of Mr. Lascelles, and was for some hours alone in the young lady's company. They were found together a little before nine o'clock by Mr. Lascelles, and a violent scene ensued, in the course of which the young lady left the apartment. (Miss Lascelles has been ill ever since the unhappy event, and is so still.

Her deposition was taken in writing at the hall.) From the young lady's evidence it appears, 1st, that the passions of both were strongly excited, and she admits having felt sufficient apprehension to induce her to twice warn Mr. Manners to self-control. 2ndly, that Mr. Manners avowed himself prepared to defy Mr. Lascelles' authority in the matter of the marriage; and 3rdly, the two sentences of their final conversation that she overheard, (both Mr. Manners' were, what can hardly be interpreted otherwise than as a threat, that "their next meeting should be a different one," and that then "he would not ask for Mr. Lascelles' hand, but take it." The diabolical character of determined and premeditated vindictiveness thus given to an otherwise unaccountable outrage upon his victim, goes far to take away the feeling of pity which we should otherwise have felt for the murderer, regarding him as under the maddening influences of disappointed love and temporary passion. Perhaps, however, the most fatally conclusive evidence against Mr. Manners lies in the time that elapsed between his leaving the hall, and being found in the park by the murdered body. He left the house at a quarter past nine—he was found by the body of the deceased a little before eleven; so that either it must have taken him more than an hour and a half to walk a quarter of a mile—which is obviously absurd—or he must have been waiting for nearly two hours in the grounds. Why did he not return at once to the house of Mr. Topham? (where it appears that he was staying). For what—or for whom—was he waiting? If he were in the park at the time of the murder, how came it that he heard no cries, gave the unhappy gentleman no assistance, and offers no suggestion or clue to the mystery beyond the obstinate denial of his own guilt, though he confesses to having been in the grounds during the whole time of the deadly struggle, and though he was found alone with scratched hands and blood-stained clothes beside the corpse of his avowed enemy? We leave these

questions to the consideration of our readers, as they will be for that of a conscientious and impartial jury, not, we trust, blinded by the wealth and position of the criminal to the hideous nature of the crime.

'The funeral is to take place to-morrow; George Manners is fully committed to take his trial for wilful murder at the ensuing assizes.'

The above condemning extract only too well represented the state of public feeling. All Middlesex—nay, all England—was roused to indignation, and poor Edmund's youth and infirmities made the crime appear the more cowardly and detestable.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### DRIFTING TO THE END.

My misery between the time of the murder and the trial was terrible from many causes: my brother's death; George's position; the knowledge of his sufferings, and my inability to see or soothe them—and, worst of all, the firm conviction of his guilt in everyone's mind, and Harriet's ceaseless reproaches. I do not think that I should have lived through it, but for Dr. Penn. That excellent and revered man's kindness, will, I trust, ever be remembered by me with due gratitude. He went up to town constantly, at his own expense, and visited my dear George in Newgate, administering all the consolations of his high office and long experience, and being the bearer of our messages to each other. From him also I gleaned all the news of which otherwise I should have been kept in ignorance; how George's many friends were making every possible exertion on his behalf, and how an excellent counsel was retained for him. But far beyond all his great kindness, was to me the simple fact that he shared my belief in George's innocence; for there were times when the universal persuasion of his guilt almost shook, not my faith, but my reason.

There were early prayers in our little church in the morning; too early, Harriet said, for her to attend much, especially of late, when Dr.

Penn's championship of George Manners had led her to discover more formalism in his piety, and northern broadness in his accent than before. But these quiet services were my daily comfort in those troublous days; and in the sweet fresh walk home across the park, my more than father and I hatched endless conspiracies on George's behalf between the church porch and the rectory gate. Our chief difficulty, I confess, lay in the question that the world had by this time so terribly answered—who did it? If George were innocent, who was guilty? My poor brother had not been popular, and I do not say that one's mind could not have fixed on a man more likely to commit the crime than George, under not less provocation. But it was an awful deed, Nelly, to lay to any man's charge, even in thought; and no particle of evidence arose to fix the guilt on any one else, or even to suggest an accomplice. As the time wore on, suspense became sickening.

'Sir,' I said to him one day, 'I am breaking down. I have brought some plants to set in your garden. I wish you would give me something to do for you. Your shirts to make, your stockings to darn. If I were a poor woman I should work down my trouble. As it is—'

'Hush!' said the doctor; 'you are what God has made you. My dear madam, Janet tells me, what my poor eyes have hardly observed, that my ruffles are more worn than becoms a doctor in divinity. Now for myself—'

'Hush!' said I, mimicking him. 'My dear sir, you have taught me to plot and conspire, and this very afternoon I shall hold a secret interview with Mistress Janet. But say something about my trouble. What will happen?—How will it end?—What shall we do?'

'My love,' he said, 'keep heart. I fully believe in his innocence. There is heavy evidence against him, but there are also some strong points in his favour; and you must believe that the jury have no object to do anything but justice, or believe anything but the truth, and

that they will find accordingly. And God defend the right!

Eleanor!—They found him guilty.

I have asked Dr. Penn to permit me to make an extract from his journal in this place. It is less harrowing to copy than to recall. I omit the pious observations and reflections which grace the original. Comforting as they are to me, it seems a profanity to make them public; besides, it is his wish that I should withhold them, which is sufficient.

From the diary of the Rev. Arthur Penn, D.D., Rector of Crossdale, Middlesex.

“When he came into the dock he looked (so it seemed to me) altered since I had last seen him; more anxious and worn, that is, but yet composed and dignified. Doubtless I am but a prejudiced witness; but his face to me lacks both the confusion and the effrontery of guilt. He looks like one pressed by a heavy affliction, but enduring it with fortitude. I think his appearance affected and astonished many in the court. Those who were prepared to see a hardened ruffian, or, at best, a cowering criminal, must have been startled by the intellectual and noble style of his beauty, the grace and dignity of his carriage, and the modest simplicity of his behaviour. I am but a doting old man; for I think on no evidence could I convict him in the face of those good eyes of his, to which sorrow has given a wistful look that at times is terrible; as if now and then the agony within showed its face at the windows of the soul. Once only every trace of composure vanished—it was when sweet Mistress Dorothy was called; then he looked simply mad. I wonder—but no! no!—he did not commit this great crime,—not even in a fit of insanity.

“Mr. A.—is a very able advocate, and, in his cross-examination of the man Crosby and of Mistress Dorothy, did his best to atone for the cruel law which keeps the prisoner’s counsel at such disadvantage. The counsel for the prosecution had

pressed hard on my dear lady, especially in reference to those farewell words overheard by her, which seem to give the only (though that, I say, an incredible) clue, to what remains the standing mystery of the event—the missing hand. Then Mr. A.—rose to cross-examine. He said:—

“During that part of the quarrel when you were present, did the prisoner use any threats or suggestions of personal violence?”

“No.”

“In the fragment of conversation that you overheard at the last, did you at the time understand the prisoner to be conveying taunts or threats?”

“No.”

“How did you interpret the unaccountable anxiety on the prisoner’s part to shake hands with a man by whom he believed himself to be injured, and with whom he was quarrelling?”

“Mr. Manners’ tone was such as one uses to a spoilt child. I believed that he was determined to avoid a quarrel at any price, in deference to my brother’s infirmity and his own promise to me. He was very angry before Edmund came in; but I believe that afterwards he was shocked and sobered at the obviously irresponsible condition of my poor brother when enraged. He had never seen him so before.”

“Is it true that Mr. Manners’ pocket-knife was in your possession at the time of the murder?”

“It is.”

“Does your window look upon the ‘Honeysuckle Walk,’ where the prisoner says that he spent the time between leaving your house and the finding of the body?”

“Yes.”

“Was the prisoner likely to have any attractive associations connected with it, in reference to yourself?”

“We had often been there together before we were engaged. It was a favourite walk of mine.”

“Do you suppose that anyone in this walk could hear cries proceeding from the low gate?”

“Certainly not.”

'The cross-examination of Crosby was as follows:—

Mr. A.—"Were the prisoner's clothes much disordered, as if he had been struggling?"

"No; he looked much as usual; but he was covered with blood."

"So we have heard you say. Do you think that a man, in perfectly clean clothes, could have lifted the body out of the ditch without being covered with blood?"

"No: perhaps not."

"Was there any means by which so much blood could have been accumulated in the ditch, unless the body had been thrown there?"

"I think not. The pool were too big."

"I have two more questions to ask, and I beg the special attention of the jury to the answers. Is the ditch, or is it not, very thickly overgrown with brambles and brushwood?"

"Yes; there be a many brambles."

"Do you think that any single man could drag a heavy body from the bottom of the ditch on to the bank, without severely scratching his hands?"

"No; I don't suppose he could."

"That is all I wish to ask."

'Not being permitted to address the jury, it was all that he could do. Then the Recorder summed up. God forgive him the fatal accuracy with which he placed every link in a chain of evidence so condemning that I confess poor George seemed almost to have been taken *in flagrante delicto*. The jury withdrew; and my sweet Mistress Dorothy, who had remained in court against my wish, suddenly dropped like an apple-blossom, and I carried her out in my arms. When I had placed her in safety, I came back, and pressed through the crowd to hear the verdict.

'As I got in, the Recorder's voice fell on my ear, every word like a funeral knell,—"*May the Lord have mercy on your soul!*"

'I think for a few minutes I lost my senses. I have a confused remembrance of swaying hither and thither in a crowd; of execration, and pity, and gaping curiosity; and

then I got out, and some one passed me, whose arm I grasped. It was Mr. A.

"Tell me," I said, "is there no hope? No recommendation to mercy? Nothing?"

'He dragged me into a room, and, seizing me by the button, exclaimed—

"We don't want mercy; we want justice! I say, sir, curse the present condition of the law! It *must* be altered, and I shall live to see it. If I might have addressed the jury—there were a dozen points—we should have carried him through. Besides," he added, in a tone that seemed to apologise for such a secondary consideration, "I may say to you that I fully believe that he is innocent, and am as sorry on his account as on my own that we have lost the case."

'And so the day is ended. *Fiat voluntas Domini!*

Yes, Eleanor! Dr. Penn was right. The day did end—and the next—and the next; and drop by drop the cup of sorrow was drained. And when the draught is done, should we be the better, Nelly, if it had been nectar?

I had neither died nor gone mad when the day came—the last complete day that George was to see on earth. It was Sunday; and, after a sleepless night, I saw the red sun break through the grey morning. I always sleep with my window open; and, as I lay and watched the sunrise, I thought—

'He will see this sunrise, and tomorrow's sunrise; but no other! No, no!—never more!

But then a stronger thought seemed to rise involuntarily against that one—

'Peace, fool! If this be the sorrow, it is one that must come to all men.'

And then, Nelly (it is strange, but it was so), there broke out in the stone pine by my window, a chorus of little birds whom the sunbeams had awakened; and they sang so sweet and so loud (like the white bird that sang to the monk Felix), that earthly cares seemed to fade away, and I fell asleep, and slept the



first sound, dreamless sleep that had blessed me since our great trouble came.

# CHAPTER V.

## BETWEEN TWO WORLDS.

Dr. Penn was with George this day, and was to be with him to the last. His duty was taken by a curate.

I will not attempt to describe my feelings at this terrible time, but merely narrate circumstantially the wonderful events (or illusions, call them which you will) of the evening.

We sat upstairs in the blue room, and Harriet fell asleep on the sofa.

It was about half-past ten o'clock when she awoke with a scream, and in such terror that I had much difficulty in soothing her. She seemed very unwilling to tell me the cause of her distress; but at last confessed that on the two preceding nights she had had a vivid and alarming dream, on each night the same. Poor Edmund's hand (she recognized it by the sapphire ring) seemed to float in the air before her; and even after she awoke, she still seemed to see it floating towards the door, and then coming back again, till it vanished altogether. She had seen it again now in her sleep. I sat silent, struggling with a feeling of indignation. Why had she not spoken of it before? I do not know how long it might have been before I should have broken the silence, but that my eyes turned to the partially open window and the dark night that lay beyond. Then I shrieked, louder than she had done—

'Harriet! *There it is!*'

There it was—to my eyes—the detached hand, round which played a pale light—the splendid sapphire gleaming unearthly, like the flame of a candle that is burning blue. But Harriet could see nothing. She said that I frightened her, and shook her nerves, and took pleasure in doing so; that I was the author of all our trouble, and she wished I would drop the dreadful subject. She would have said much more, but that I startled her by the vehemence of my interruption. I said that the day was past when I would

sacrifice my peace or my duty to her whims; and she ventured no remonstrance when I announced that I intended to follow the hand so long as it moved, and discover the meaning of the apparition. I then flew down stairs and out into the garden, where it still gleamed, and commenced a slow movement towards the gate. But my flight had been observed, Nelly, by Robert, our old butler. I had always been his favourite in the family, and, since my grief, his humble sympathy had only been second to that of Dr. Penn. I had noticed the anxious watch he had kept over me since the trial, with a sort of sad amusement. I afterwards learnt that all his fears had culminated to a point when he saw me rush wildly from the house that night. He had thought I was going to drown myself. He concealed his fears at the time, however, and said—

'What be the matter, Miss Dorothy?'

'Is that you, Robert?' I said. 'Come here. Look! Do you see?'

'See what?' he said.

'Don't you see anything?' I said. 'No light? Nothing?'

'Nothin' whatever,' said Robert, decidedly; 'it be as dark as pitch.'

I stood silent, gazing at the apparition, which, having reached the gate, was slowly readvancing. If it were fancy, why did it not vanish? I rubbed my eyes, but it was there still. Robert interrupted me, solemnly.

'Miss Dorothy, do you see anything?'

'Robert,' I said, 'you are a faithful friend. Listen! I see before me the lost hand of your dead master. I know it by the sapphire ring. It is surrounded by a pale light, and moves slowly. My sister has seen it three times in her sleep; and I see it now with my waking eyes. You may laugh, Robert; but it is too true.'

I was not prepared for the indignant reply:

'Laugh, Miss Dorothy! The Lord forbid! If so be you do see anything, and it should be the Lord's will to reveal anything about poor dear Master Edmund to you as

loved him, and is his sister, who am I that I should laugh? My mother had a cousin (many a time has she told me the story) as married a sailor (he was mate on board a vessel bound for the West Indies), and one night, about three weeks after her husband had—

'Robert!' I said; 'you shall tell me that story another day with pleasure; but no time is to be lost now. I mean to follow the hand: will you come with me and take care of me?'

'Go in, ma'am,' he said; 'wrap up warm, and put on thick shoes, and come quietly down to this door. I'll just slip in and quiet the servants, and meet you.'

'And bring a lantern,' I said; 'this light does not light you.'

In five minutes we were there again; and the hand was silent as ever.

'Do you see it now?' whispered the latter, anxiously.

'Yes,' I said; 'it is moving.'

'Be on, be on,' I said, 'I will keep close behind you.'

It was pitch dark, still, except for the glimmering hand, and the erratic circles of light cast by the lantern; we could see nothing. The hand gradually moved back, narrowing to a good walking pace, passing over the checker-board and ending at us. Still I completely lost knowledge of our position; but now we were directly forward. At last we got into a road, and went along by a wall, and, after a few steps, the

'Never mind, my dear young lady,' he said, soothingly. 'Go on, and the Lord be with you! But be careful. You're sure you see it now?'

'Certain,' I said. 'It is moving. Come on.'

We went forward, and I heard a click behind me.

'What is that?' I said.

'Hush!' he whispered; 'make no noise! It was my pistol. Go gently, my dear young lady. It is a farmyard, and you may stumble.'

'It has stopped over a building!' I whispered.

'Not the house!' he returned, hoarsely.

'I am going on,' I said. 'Here we are. What is it? Whose is it?'

He came close to me, and whispered solemnly—

'Miss Dorothy! be brave, and make no noise! We are in Farmer Parker's yard, and this is a barn.'

Then the terror came over me.

'Let us turn back,' I said. 'You are right, you may have made even tramples, but not along in other people's fields. Take me home.'

But Robert would not take me home; and my courage came back, and I held the lantern, what he mentioned the door. Then the ghastly hand passed into the barn, and we followed it.

'It has stopped in the far corner,' I said. 'There must be the place of something.'

'It is nothing of good,' he whispered. 'I know the place. It



loved him, and is his sister, who am I that I should laugh? My mother had a cousin many a time has she told me the story as married a sailor (he was mate on board a vessel bound for the West Indies), and one night, about three weeks after her husband had—

'Robert!' I said; 'you shall tell me that story another day with pleasure; but no time is to be lost now. I mean to follow the hand: will you come with me and take care of me?'

'Go in, ma'am,' he said; 'wrap up warm, and put on thick shoes, and come quietly down to this door. I'll just slip in and quiet the servants, and meet you.'

'And bring a lantern,' I said; 'this light does not light you.'

In five minutes we were there again; and the hand was visible as ever.

'Do you see it now?' whispered the butler, anxiously.

'Yes,' I said; 'it has moved.'

'Go on,' he said; 'I will keep close behind you.'

It was pitch dark and, except for the glimmering wood, and the erratic circles of light cast by the lantern, we could see nothing. The hand gradually moved faster, increasing to a good walking pace, passing over the garden-gate and leading us on till I completely lost knowledge of our position; but still we went steadily forward. At last we got into a road, and went along by a wall; and, after a few steps, the hand, which was before me, moved sharply aside.

'Robert,' I said, 'it has gone over a gate—we must go too! Where are we?'

He answered, in a tone of the deepest horror—

'Miss Dorothy! for the Lord's sake, think what you are doing, and let us turn back while we can! You've had some attention; but it's an awful thing to bring an innocent man to trouble.'

'The innocent man is in trouble!' I said, passionately. 'Is it nothing that he should die, if truth could save him? You may go back if you like; but I shall go on. Tell me, whose place is this?'

'Never mind, my dear young lady,' he said, soothingly. 'Go on, and the Lord be with you! But be careful. You're sure you see it now?'

'Certain,' I said. 'It is moving. Come on.'

We went forward, and I heard a click behind me.

'What is that?' I said.

'Hush!' he whispered; 'make no noise! It was my pistol. Go gently, my dear young lady. It is a farm-yard, and you may stumble.'

'It has stopped over a building!' I whispered.

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'I am going on,' I said. 'Here we are. What is it? Whose is it?'

He came close to me, and whispered solemnly—

'Miss Dorothy! be brave, and make no noise! We are in farmer Parker's yard, and this is a barn.'

Then the terror came over me.

'Let us turn back,' I said. 'You see light. This may bear one's own scoldings, but not drag in other people. Take me home!'

But Robert would not take me home; and my courage came back, and I held the lantern whilst he unfastened the door. Then the ghostly hand passed into the barn, and we followed it.

'It has stopped in the far corner,' I said. 'There seems to be wood or something.'

'It's bundles of wood,' he whispered. 'I know the place. Sit down, and tell me if it moves.'

I sat down, and waited long and wearily, while he moved heavy bundles of firewood, pausing now and then to ask, 'Is it here still?' At last he asked no more; and in a quarter of an hour he only spoke once: then it was to say—

'This plank has been moved.'

After a while he came away to look for a spade. He found one, and went back again. At last a smothered sound made me spring up and rush to him; but he met me, driving me back.

'I beg of you, dear Miss Dorothy, keep away. Have you a handkerchief with you?'

I had one, and gave it to him.



Drawn by J. Abbot Paquin.]

# THE MYSTERY OF THE BLOODY HAND.

[See the Story.]

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His hands were covered with earth. He had only just gone back again when I gave a cry—

‘Robert! *It has gone!*’

He came up to me, keeping one hand behind him.

‘Miss Dorothy, if ever you were good and brave, hold out now!’

I beat my hands together—‘It has gone! It has gone!’

‘It has not gone!’ he said. ‘Master Edmund’s hand is in this handkerchief. It has been buried under a plank of the flooring!’

I gasped, ‘Let me see it!’

But he would not. ‘No, no! my dear lady, you must not—cannot. I only knew it by the ring!’

Then he made me sit down again, whilst he replaced the firewood; and then, with the utmost quietness, we set out to return, I holding the lantern in one hand, and with the other clinging to his arm (for the apparition that had been my guide before was gone), and he carrying the awful relic in his other hand. Once, as we were leaving the yard, he whispered—

‘Look!’

‘I see nothing,’ said I.

‘Hold up your lantern,’ he whispered.

‘There is nothing but the dog-kennel,’ I said.

‘Miss Dorothy,’ he said, ‘*the dog has not barked to-night!*’

By the time we reached home, my mind had fully realized the importance of our discovery, and the terribly short time left us in which to profit by it, supposing, as I fully believed, that it was the first step to the vindication of George’s innocence. As we turned into the gate, Robert, who had been silent for some time, broke out—

‘Miss Dorothy! Mr. George Manners is as innocent as I am; and God forgive us all for doubting him! What shall we do?’

‘I am going up to town,’ I said, ‘and you are going with me. We will go to Dr. Penn. He has a lodging close by the prison: I have the address. At eight o’clock tomorrow the king himself could not undo this injustice. We have, let me see, how many hours?’

Robert pulled out his old silver

watch and brought it to the lantern.

‘It is twenty minutes to twelve.’

‘Rather more than eight hours. Heaven help us! You will get something to eat, Robert, and put the horses at once into the chariot. I will be ready.’

I went straight upstairs, and met Harriet at the door. I pushed her back into the room and took her hands.

‘Harriet! Robert has found poor Edmund’s hand, *with the ring*, buried under some wood in Thomas Parker’s barn. I am going up to town with him at once, to put the matter into Dr. Penn’s hands, and save George Manners’ life, if it be not too late.’

She wrenched her hands away, and flung herself at my feet. I never saw such a change come over any face. She had had time in the (what must have been) anxious interval of our absence, for some painful enough reflection, and my announcement had broken through the blindness of a selfish mind, and found its way where she seldom let anything come—to her feelings.

‘Oh, Dolly! Dolly! will you ever forgive me? Why did I not tell you before? But I thought it was only a dream. And indeed, indeed I thought Mr. Manners had done it. But that man Parker! If it had not been for Mr. Manners being found there, I should have sworn that Parker had done it. Dolly! I saw him that night. He came in and helped. And once I saw him look at Mr. Manners with such a strange expression, and he seemed so anxious to make him say that it was a quarrel, and that he had done it in self-defence. But you know I thought it must be Mr. Manners—and I did so love poor Edmund!’

And she lay sobbing in agony on the ground. I said—

‘My love, I pray that it is not too late: but we must not waste time. Help me now, Harriet!’

She sprang up at once.

‘Yes! you must have food. You shall go. I shall not go with you. I am not worthy, but I will pray till you come back again.’

I said, 'There is one most important thing for you to do. Let no soul go out or come into the house till I return, or some gossip will bring it to Parker's ears that we have gone to London.'

Harriet promised, and rushed off to get me food and wine. With her own hands she filled a hot-water bottle for my feet in the chariot, supplied my purse with gold, and sewed some notes up in my stays; and, (as if anxious to crowd into this one occasion all the long withheld offices of sisterly kindness,) came in with her arms full of a beautiful set of sables that belonged to her—cloak, cuffs, muff, &c.—and in these she dressed me. And then we fell into each other's arms, and I wept upon her neck the first tears I had shed that day. As I stood on the door-step, she held up the candle and looked at me.

'My dear!' she said, 'how pretty your sweet face does look out of those great furs! You shall keep them always.'

Dear Harriet! Her one idea—beauty. I suppose the 'ruling passion,' whatever it may be, is strong with all of us, even in the face of death. Moreover, her's was one of those shallow minds that seem instinctively to escape by any avenue from a painful subject; and by the time that I was in the chariot, she had got over the first shock, and there was an almost infectious cheerfulness in her farewell.

'It must be all right, Dolly!'

Then I fell back, and we started. The warm light of the open door became a speck, and then nothing; and in the long dark drive, when every footfall of the horses seemed to consume an age, the sickening agony of suspense was almost intolerable. Oh, my dear! never, never shall I forget that night. The black trees and hedges whirling past us in the darkness, always the same, like an enchanted drive; then the endless suburbs, and at last the streets where people lounged in corners and stopped the way, as if every second of time were not worth a king's ransom; and sedan-chairs trotted lightly home from gay parties, as if life were not one long

tragedy. Once the way was stopped, once we lost it. That mistake nearly killed me. At last a watchman helped us to the little by-street where Dr. Penn was lodging, near which a loud sound of carpenters' work and hurrying groups of people puzzled me exceedingly. After much knocking, an upper window was opened and a head put out, and my dear friend's dear voice called to us. I sprang out on to the pavement and cried—

'Dr. Penn, this is Dorothy.'

He came down and took us in, and then (my voice failing) Robert explained to him the nature of our errand, and showed him the ghastly proof. Dr. Penn came back to me.

'My love,' he said, 'you must come up stairs and rest.'

'Rest!' I shrieked, 'never! Get your hat, doctor, and come quickly. Let us go to the king. Let us do something. We have very little time, and he must be saved.'

I believe I was very unreasonable; I fear that I delayed them some minutes before good Dr. Penn could persuade me that I should only be a hindrance, that he would do everything that was possible, and could do so much better with no one but Robert.

'My love,' he said, 'trust me. To obey is better than sacrifice!'

I went up-stairs into the dingy little sitting-room, and he went to call his landlady—'a good woman,' he said: 'I have known her long.' Then he went away, and Robert with him, to the house of the Home Secretary.

It was three o'clock. Five hours still!

I sat staring at the sprawling paper on the walls, and at the long snuff of the candle that Dr. Penn had lighted, and at a framed piece of embroidery, representing Abraham sacrificing Isaac, that hung upon the wall. Were there no succouring angels now?

The door opened, and I looked wearily round. A motherly woman, with black eyes, fat cheeks, and a fat wedding ring, stood curtsying at the door. I said, 'I think you are Dr. Penn's landlady? He says you are very good. Pray come in.'

Then I dropped my head on my hand again, and stared vacantly as before. Exhaustion had almost become stupor, and it was in a sort of dream that I watched the stout figure moving softly to and fro, lighting the fire, and bringing an air of comfort over the dreary little parlour. Then she was gone for a little bit, and I felt a little more lonely and weary; and then I heard that cheerful clatter, commonly so grateful to feminine exhaustion, and the good woman entered with a toasted glow upon her face, bearing a tray with tea, and such hospitable accompaniments as she could command. She set them down and came up to me with an air of determination.

'My dear, you must be a good young lady and take some tea. We all have our troubles, but a good heart goes a long way.'

Her pitying face broke me down. How faithful without feminine sympathy I had been through all my troubles I had never felt as I felt it now that it had come. I fairly dropped my head upon her shoulder and sobbed out the apparently irrelevant remark—

'Dear madam, I have no mother!'

She understood me, and flinging her arms round me, sobbed louder than I. It would have been wicked to offer further resistance. She brought down pillows, covered them with a red shawl, and propped me up till the horsehair sofa became an easy couch, and with mixed tears and smiles, I contrived to swallow a few mouthfuls, a feat which she exalted to an act of sublime virtue.

'And now, my dear,' she said, 'you will have some warm water and wash your hands and face and smooth your hair, and go to sleep for a bit.'

'I cannot sleep,' I said.

But Mrs. Smith was not to be baffled.

'I shall give you something to make you,' said she.

And so, when the warm water had done its work, I had to swallow a sleeping-draught and be laid easily upon the sofa. Her last words as she 'tucked me up' were, odd enough—

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'The tea's brought back a bit of colour to your cheeks, miss, and I will say you do look pretty in them beautiful sables!'

A very different thought was working in my head as the sleeping-draught tingled through my veins.

'Will the birds sing at sunrise?'

Nelly, I slept twelve long hours without a dream. It was four o'clock in the afternoon of Monday when I awoke, and only then, I believe, from the mesmeric influence of being gazed at. Eleanor! there is only one such pair of eyes in all the world! George Manners was kneeling by my side.

Abraham was still sacrificing his son upon the wall, but my Isaac was restored to me. I sat up and flung myself into his arms. It was long, long before either of us could speak, and, oddly enough, one of the first things he said was (twitching my cloak with the quaint curiosity of a man very ignorant about feminine belongings), 'My darling, you seem sadly ill, but yet, Doralice, your sweet face does look so pretty in these great furs.'

My story is ended, Nelly, and my promise fulfilled. The rest you know. How the detective, who left London before four o'clock that morning, found the rusty knife that had been buried with the hand, and apprehended Parker, who confessed his guilt. The wretched man said, that being out on the fatal night about some sick cattle, he had met poor Edmund by the low gate; that Edmund had begun, as usual, to taunt him; that the opportunity of revenge was too strong, and he had murdered him. His first idea had been flight, and being unable to drag the ring from Edmund's hand, which was swollen, he had cut it off, and thrown the body into the ditch. On hearing of the finding of the body, and of poor George's position, he determined to brave it out, with what almost fatal success we have seen. He dared not then sell the ring, and so buried it in his barn. Two things respecting his end were singular: First, at the last, he sent for Dr. Penn, imploring him to stay with him till he died.

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That good man, as ever, obeyed the call of duty and kindness, but he was not fated to see the execution of my brother's murderer. The night before, Thomas Parker died in prison; not by his own hand, Nelly. A fit of apoplexy, the result of intense mental excitement, forestalled the vengeance of the law.

Need I tell you, dear friend, who know it so well, that I am happy?

Not, my love, that such tragedies can be forgotten—these deep wounds leave a scar. This one brought my husband's first white hairs, and took away my girlhood for ever. But if the first blush of careless gaiety has gone from life, if we are a little 'old before our time,' it may be that this

state of things has its advantages. Perhaps, having known together such real affliction, we cannot now afford to be disturbed by the petty vexations and worthless misunderstandings that form the troubles of smoother lives. Perhaps, having been all but so awfully parted, we can never afford, in this short life, to be otherwise than of one heart and one soul. Perhaps, my dear, in short, the love that kept faith through shame, and was cemented by fellow-suffering, can hardly do otherwise than flourish to our heart's best content in the sunshine of prosperity with which God has now blessed us.

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#### A DAY DREAM. (FEB. 14.)

THE beechen woods, the old brick hall,  
The river widening to a lake,  
I love them one, I love them all,  
I love them for a maiden's sake.

A maiden with whose gathering blush  
The very roses dare not vie.  
The daisies, which her footsteps crush,  
The very daisies love and die.

Her lips half-conscious of a smile;  
Her eyes all beaming with delight;  
A white rose in her hair the while,  
Like frosted moon against the night.

No lovelier roses bloom than these;  
No woodland song more sweet than here;  
Yet song and roses fail to please,  
When love has told me, she is near.

In vain on Alpine snows I stand,  
By Danube's osiered stream recline.  
I change the sky; I change the land;  
Change cannot change this love of mine.

Forgetful of the city's mart,  
Of feudal tower, of vine-clad hill,  
I only feel an aching heart,  
While Love triumphant mocks my will.

I tread in memory by her side  
The swelling uplands of the park,  
The road, green-swarded, up the ride  
To fields, dominion of the lark.

With bated breath, and faltering speech,  
I pause enchanted when she speaks.  
Gone from my view are hall and beech;  
But laughing eyes and dimpled cheeks.

I remember how she came  
Out from the school beneath the trees,  
Fresh as the moon, when all aflame,  
The rose-tints bathe the sky—the seas.

We pass once more the garden wall,  
Plantations of the larch and fir,  
Beneath the arch and by the hall,  
By trees with autumn winds astir.

The bells are ringing in the tower,  
We pause a moment at the door.  
Within is many a carved flower,  
And coloured sunbeams stain the floor.

There is the rectory, there the ground  
All hooped for croquet where we played;  
There stand the elms long ages crowned,  
As guardians of the village glade.

All yellow-red the chestnut stands,  
The bridge and willow span the stream;  
I feel once more the clasp of hands—  
A parting look—and all a dream.

The beechen woods, the old brick hall,  
The river widening to a lake,  
I love them one, I love them all,  
I love them for a maiden's sake.

S. S.

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A BALL-ROOM REMINISCENCE.

AIRILY beautiful,  
Daintily dutiful  
To her mamma in the elegant shawl;  
Gleaming so purely,  
Glancing demurely,  
Fair was Floretta that night at the ball.

Sailing divinely,  
Dancing supinely,  
Waltzing confidingly, sinking away;  
Whispering caressingly,  
Sighing distressingly,  
Hid by the shrubs that encircle the bay.

Wheedling cajolingly,  
Wandering strollingly,  
Into the ante-room, shady and cool;  
Proving convincingly,  
Mimicking mincingly,  
Magnates and stagnates that whirl in the pool.

*A Ball-Room Reminiscence.*

Toying deliciously,  
Tugging maliciously,  
Gloves that are 'saxes' and stick to her hands;  
Showing right graciously,  
Not ostentatiously,  
Destitute fingers awaiting commands.

Champaigning sippingly,  
Nibbling up trippingly,  
Biscuits and ices and jelly and cream;  
Laughing melodiously,  
Picturing odiously,  
Bachelor habits and serfdom supreme.

Looking up poutingly,  
Looking down doubtfully,  
Conning her card with a woebegone glance;  
Yielding unwillingly,  
Answering chillingly,  
Withering the Captain who claims her to dance.

Fanning ferociously,  
Grumbling precociously,  
Seeking a rest after whirligig brief;  
Lecturing icingly,  
Smiling enticingly,  
Making me slink round the wall like a thief.

Rising up buoyantly,  
Breathing out joyantly,  
'Dear Mr. Robinson, what a relief!',  
Sparkling so wittily,  
Moving so prettily,  
Filling my heart with an exquisite grief.

Leaning recliningly,  
Starting repiningly,  
Horrid announcement, 'The carriage is here!'  
Pausing coquettishly,  
Hurrying pettishly,  
Gouty papa holds the horses so dear.

Argued litigiously,  
Treasured religiously,  
Now, in my memory's innermost hall,  
Dearest Floretta,  
I'll never forget a  
Phase of the rapture that night at the ball.

J. C. B.



## A FAREWELL VALENTINE.

WHAT mysterious influence is it that naturally invests the miller's daughter with an amount of romance and charm denied, *a priori*, to the girl-children of the grocer, the shoemaker, or even the corn-dealer? These latter ladies have to achieve *their* honours; they must cultivate *their* attractions; they must show fair cause why *they* shall be considered beautiful, graceful, verse-inspiring. But the miller's daughter is born to a certain rank as inevitably as the earl's; and the one is a beauty just as the other is a 'lady,'—by courtesy, if by nothing else. Unlike Audrey, the gods *have* made her poetical; she has nothing to do but to keep the place which a kind and partial fate has allotted her.

Now Phoebe Staunton was one of this privileged class, who was also magnanimously independent of her privileges. I mean, that even had she *not* been the miller's daughter, she would still have commanded a position in her own small but sufficient world, as being very pretty, very vivacious, and very charming. After this, it may be needless to add, that at the age of nineteen she was a most mischievous and inveterate flirt. Vivacity and intelligence, combined with unusual good looks, always take this fatal direction, I have observed, among only partially cultivated young ladies in whatever rank of life. Uneducated, Phoebe was not; for she was quick and clever, and had won a good many prizes, and acquired some amount of useful and ornamental knowledge during three years at boarding school. But as regards 'the higher qualities of the mind and heart,' to speak didactically, they were at present in a very crude and undeveloped state in Miss Staunton. She had had an unwholesomely prosperous life through as many of those nineteen years as she could remember; for her mother died when she was an infant, and her aunt Charlotte, who then came to supply the place of housekeeper at

the mill, had consistently spoiled her brother's youngest child ever since. So did the miller himself; and although her brothers teased her after the manner of boys during their earlier years, they, too, gave in more or less to the little witch's fascinations when they came home for occasional visits after they were severally established in the world. Added to this, she was the belle of her native village—her title acknowledged by acclamation by all the disengaged young men and impartial older ones of Cotover, and only disputed by those ladies, lovers, and suborned husbands and fathers, whose opposition, in fact, only served to confirm the distinction. Thus being indulged, praised, and thought much of on all hands, it is no wonder that Phoebe Staunton bid fair to strike on that rock of self-esteem, self-will, and selfishness in general, that has caused so many well-begun voyages to result in disaster and distress. That she was *not* utterly selfish,—that she had her happy seasons of generous thoughtfulness for others, and even of comparative humility regarding herself, must be held as vastly creditable to the original sweetness of her nature, which circumstances had certainly done their utmost to spoil, so far.

Now for her lovers. Without counting those admirers whom inequality of fortune or diffidence of disposition kept at a distance, she had, at the age of nineteen, several devoted aspirants to her favour, who each and all waited, it is supposed, not so much for any sign to be shown of special preference for his individual self, but in the hope that his rivals might either be sent off, or retire of their own accord from what seemed a hopeless siege. It appeared that neither of these young men could summon courage to declare his affection to a damsel who so recklessly scattered both smiles and frowns among her victims, now raising one of them to the seventh heaven of delight by giving him a flower from her garden—

asking him to train for her a retriever or a starling, or entreating his opinion on the comparative merits of pink, or blue, or lilac ribbons in her new bonnet; and the very next time of meeting, perhaps, ignoring the hapless youth's claims on her attention altogether, or snubbing him at every remark with that decisive trenchancy of diction which is generally forthcoming in such cases.

From nineteen to twenty, from twenty to twenty-one, thus it was with Phoebe. And then, interested friends began to remark that Miss Staunton had better look about her; it might be wise to make up her mind in good time; to choose while she had the power of choice; to remember the story of the crooked stick, &c., &c., &c. For, as may be inferred, at that time, and in the primitive community of Cotover, twenty-one was considered rather a mature age for a woman to be still disengaged; and indeed, in a year or two she would be in danger of receiving that honourable title of old maid, which in these days, and in a more sophisticated state of society, is indefinitely postponed to a much later period of existence.

Nevertheless, the miller's daughter seemed to be in no hurry. One by one, most of her earlier devotees had dropped off, it is true; but their places had been supplied by new ones, and there was no falling-off in the actual number of adorers. Moreover, one who had been among the first still remained constant,—patiently waiting on her smiles and frowns now as he had done any time during these two years, apparently unshaken by rebuffs, unwearied by suspense, evincing a courage and a long-suffering endurance, worthy, it must be said, of a better cause.

But in more respects than one David Pierce was considered by his neighbours to be very queer and unaccountable, which epithets, in other places than Cotover, often only signify that the object thereof is widely different from, and perhaps superior to the jury which brings in the verdict on him. In the present case, the facts briefly were that this

young man, being an orphan, without relatives or friends, save those he had made for himself, had gradually worked his way from the position of 'odd boy' at Squire Faversham's farm, till he now filled the responsible office of manager and general overseer; that his steady integrity and clear-headed intelligence made him unusually valued by his employer; and that his quiet and studious tastes caused him to pass most of his leisure hours either in his own home, or at the one or two houses where dwelt his particular friends. The miller had been one of these for many years before Phoebe came on the scene in any other character than as a spoiled child, to be petted and played with by him as by the rest of her father's visitors. Then came an interregnum of three years chiefly passed at a school in the county town, and then the young lady came home 'for good,' and to enter on that career of conquest which has been already adverted to, and David Pierce gave in his allegiance at once, and, as it appeared, irrevocably.

Not that he obtruded his attentions on the capricious lady of his love with the busy perseverance of his rivals. An occasional look-on might have found some difficulty in detecting the lover in this one among Phoebe's many suitors. But she knew the extent of her power over him well enough, and used it, too, with artful discretion, always keeping well within its limits, during those two years. She knew her power over him;—but she was not so well acquainted with his power over himself. As yet, she had not forced him to exert it.

Once in the course of a discussion about a very sentimental poem in the local newspaper, she heard Mr. Pierce give it as *his* opinion, that however patient a lover might, could, or should be while there was hope for him, no man worthy the name would spend his feelings and waste his life in sighing after a girl whom he believed to prefer somebody else. Phoebe took no verbal notice of this statement; but she registered it in that restless little brain of hers, together with the resolve to

put the gentleman's hardihood to the test one day. Not that she wished to make him miserable out and out, and for long together, but just to let him feel that it wasn't so easy to shake off the chains he had worn so long, and which, indeed, she was aware, had hitherto hung more lightly on him than on the other pretenders to her favour. It would do him no harm to pull them a little tighter; it would only make him all the happier afterwards, when—

To this effect ran Miss Staunton's meditations; and although she did not pursue them to a more definite conclusion, it may perhaps be gathered from them thus far, that her final intentions with regard to Mr. Pierce were not of an obdurate nature. If the truth could have been known, indeed, it would have appeared that so much of her heart as was not choked up by vanity and self-love was fairly devoted to David Pierce. She cared for him more than she knew, although, unhappily, she cared for her own gratification yet a little more.

Of course, opportunity was not long wanting—it never is—of carrying out a malignant plan. At Christmas, one of her brothers brought with him a friend—a fellow-clerk—to swell the circle which annually gathered round the miller's hospitable table. Of this circle, David for years past had always formed one; and it had been a happy time for him, to which he looked forward weeks beforehand with more eagerness than most people would have believed him capable of feeling. The Christmas-eve fireside talk was so pleasant, and Phoebe looked so pretty and so sweet sitting over her work at the table, and putting in a saucy word now and then. Then on Christmas morning, he walked beside her to church—a process which by some mental association always seemed to him peculiarly satisfactory and delightful. Besides, Phoebe was generally her better self at these times: what earnestness there was in her nature seemed then to get the better, for a brief space, of the girlish frivolity that was generally uppermost. And then followed

the walk after service, if it was fine, and the early dinner at the mill, and the long evening that yet seemed so short to him, ending in games, and singing, and dancing, and snap-dragon, and such seasonable festivities, in all of which to take part implied being brought into more intimate contact than usual with fair Phoebe.

Christmas had thus been a happy season to David Pierce. This time, however, it was destined to be very different. Robert Staunton's friend, Mr. Ellis, was a most interesting young man. He was pale, thin, tall, and had recently recovered from a serious illness, which had left him still something of an invalid. Robert declared he was given to writing poetry as well as reading it; and it is certain that he had pleasant manners, was gentlemanlike and conversable, and able to make himself unassumingly agreeable at the mill, inasmuch that his cordial host declared him to be a right-down good sort of chap, spite of his being so sickly; and Aunt Charlotte 'took' to him, with that kind of protective tenderness which is entirely legitimate in an elderly though unmarried lady with grey curls and a cap, towards a young gentleman with weak lungs and a cough. But it was quite a different thing when Phoebe began to show a similar interest in their guest, and took to paying him thoughtful little attentions, which, although justifiable on broad principles of benevolence, on the score of his health, admitted also of a tenderer interpretation that two parties concerned unfortunately did not fail to attach thereto. Charles Ellis himself, though not suffering from overweening conceit, and David Pierce, slow as he forced himself to be in making up his mind on the momentous subject—these two, at last arrived at the same conclusion, carrying such different emotions to their separate breasts. Not that even to the former it brought unmitigated satisfaction,—for he knew himself too poor and too proud to ask the rich miller for his only daughter, and also, irresistibly charming as that daughter had made herself to him, there was a certain young lady

resident at Islington whom, until now, he had silently thought the most perfect of her sex, and could not entirely dismiss from his tenderest thoughts, even under his present circumstances. He went so far as to make fair copies of divers fragmentary verses, substituting the name of Phoebe for that of Alice,—but he was hardly satisfied with the result,—although the new name fitted into the metre perfectly, in all except one burst of admiration in which he had desired to be a king that he might offer her a marble palace, fit dwelling for the majesty of her his noble, queenly—No, Phoebe would not lend itself to the exigencies of rhyme, on that occasion; and, moreover, he was constrained to admit that the preceding epithets scarcely applied to the gay, blooming, active country girl; and his thoughts reverted with something like tender compunction to her who till now had reigned sole sovereign of his affections. If he had as good reason to believe in her preference as Miss Staunton had taken pains to assure him of hers, he could not but own to himself that his heart would not hesitate between the two. Phoebe was very pretty, very winning,—he acknowledged her charms—but his taste *did* run in the direction of darker eyes, a taller figure, a more stately style, than that of the miller's daughter,—if he might be allowed to choose.

Thus it is that no climax and crash of proposal, and consequent rejection, interrupted the suave current of Miss Phoebe's flirtation. In fact, things were in an unusual position. It appeared as if the lady were destined to make those advances she had till now been wont to meet, kindly or coyly, as the case might be, from one and all the swains honoured by her notice. It is impossible to justify Miss Staunton, and I have no wish to seek to do so; but in simple justice to her, arrant coquette and thoughtless little simpleton as she was, it ought to be said that this very shyness and tendency to retreat on the part of Mr. Charles Ellis, hindered her from being aware of the full force of her own behaviour or from seeing the

direction in which she was drifting, day after day.

An interested looker-on, however, could not fail to perceive it, and the conviction grew till it became deeply rooted in David Pierce's mind, that Phoebe Staunton at last loved as she had never loved before, and that the pale, romantic-looking Londoner had touched and fairly won the heart which had proved so obstinately invulnerable to the most ardent and long-continued attacks, till now. Unlucky Phoebe! She exulted when she saw David's brown cheek grow pale, and his eyes cloud with something that might be either sorrow or anger, at words or ways of hers that appeared significant of her interest in her new acquaintance. She felt triumphant even, when he excused himself from coming to their usual Twelfth Night party, of which he had been one any time these seven years.

'Why—what's amiss?' the miller said, opening his eyes wide, and for the first time admitting to his peaceful mind the supposition that something might be not altogether 'straight' with his much-loved and valued young friend. 'David, not coming o' Twelve Night! I never heard such trash. Write off to him immediate, Phoebe, and tell him we'll none such vagaries. Might as well tell me we're t' have no cake as no David.'

'But, father, if he don't want to come there's no need to beg and pray for his company, is there?' Phoebe poutingly observed. To which Mr. Staunton replied with a very obvious wink, intended to be sly and covert, and addressed to no one in particular.

'Oho! That's the way o' it, is it? Well then, my lass, if thou'st feelins agin' writin' to him to ax him to think better on it,—let a be, let a be. I'll rout him up, never fear; I'll make it all even.'

And although his daughter at this shook herself like an offended pigeon, and declared that she didn't fear,—and she'd no feelins, the miller remained comfortably impressed with the idea that some little tiff had arisen between the two, more indicative of affection than any-

thing else, and that after all, Phoebe and David were likely to make a match of it, just as he desired.

David's own manner and David's words, however, speedily put this idea to flight. Quietly, but steadily, he resisted his old friend's persuasion, and made him understand that his decision was unalterable. He had a great deal of serious business on hand, just now, and needed time for thought concerning future arrangements of great moment to him. In a week or two he should tell him more, when more was definitely decided. And the miller went back, a graver man; impressed, he hardly knew why, with the idea of something being wrong—but utterly at sea as to what it was, or how to set it right again.

January went on. Robert and his friend had returned to London, and the inmates of the mill had resumed the quiet way of life always broken into by the festivities of Christmas. And now Phoebe began to wonder, with a gradually increasing ache of the heart, why David kept away so persistently. Was he offended? Was he so much hurt at her behaviour? Was he actually showing resentment? And even at this point, incorrigible Phoebe felt an instant's emotion almost like gratification, in the idea that she had so swayed this man from his habitual sober tranquillity of feeling. She would make it all right, the very next time she saw him, she promised herself.

That event took place on a soft early February morning, as she was walking in the village. The grey sky, the green earth, all looked as if reluctantly dreaming of spring. The birds twittered, the first buds, doomed to be nipped by sundry ill-timed frosts and east winds, clouded the outlines that had been so clear and sharp, of willow, thorn, and chestnut branches. There is a certain tender pathos in the atmosphere of such a day, which the spirit—especially if it be young and feminine—must be very obtuse to resist. Phoebe's meditations were gentler and sweeter than usual; and when, lifting her eyes, she saw David a little way off on the opposite side of the road, her heart beat, and her eyes

grew lustrous with an eager earnestness that they had scarcely ever been called on to express through all her life before. He was walking towards her, but to her dismay, just as he came within speaking distance, he turned down a bye lane leading to the fields. Evidently, she thought, he did not see her; and on the impulse of the moment, she did what a month before she would have considered utterly impossible and not to be dreamed of—she actually crossed the road, quickened her pace, hurried after him, and when she was near enough arrested his attention and his progress by calling 'Mr. Pierce!' in a clear, though rather trembling little voice.

He turned round, and by the look of his face she felt assured that he had seen her, and that he must have purposely tried to avoid her. But he took her extended hand gravely and kindly, asked after all at home, and then appeared to have said all he had to say. Phoebe, however, was not in that position; and although she was disconcerted, perplexed—even a little frightened—she was bent on 'making it all right,' and summoned sufficient confidence to inquire, reproachfully, why he hadn't been to see them for so long?

'I've been very busy. I've been working early and late,' David replied.

'But you'll come soon, won't you?' the young lady urged. 'Do come soon. We've missed you so much all this time.'

'You're very kind,' he answered steadily and seriously, both as to voice and look, 'but the fact is I'm still very much engaged; I really find no time just now for visiting.'

'That means you don't care to find time to come and see us,' Phoebe said, and coloured crimson when she found that he attempted no denial of the charge. The interval of silence was awkward enough, and things looked desperate. Phoebe was already quite at the end of her resources. It was not at all by design, but only on the sudden instinct of the moment, that now, holding out her hand again as she



wished him good-bye—she dropped her eyes, and added timidly—

‘We’re friends, aren’t we?’

‘Yes, to be sure,’ he replied, with manful readiness, looking down at the pretty blushing face, with an expression in his own that even had she seen it, poor, foolish Phoebe would not have known how to translate.

‘And you’re not going to give up old ways, are you?’ she went on, little guessing in what sense the words were understood by him. ‘Oh, please don’t!’ and for an instant she glanced entreatingly at him; ‘it would make me so unhappy—so uncomfortable if I thought—’

‘But don’t think, don’t believe anything of the kind,’ David said, steadily. ‘Why, Phoebe, you know I wouldn’t make you unhappy for the whole world—and you shall never have cause to be, on my account, please Heaven.’

He spoke in a new tone now, full of courage and cheerfulness; and when she fairly looked up, Phoebe saw that his face was bright and cheery as his voice. And yet, somehow, she felt that all was *not* right—not, that is to say, as she wished. She was altogether puzzled, although, of course, it was incumbent on her to appear altogether satisfied.

‘I’m so glad!’ she said, and then they shook hands, and parted.

‘Poor child, she partly guesses; but she’—he thought—‘doesn’t know. I hope she never will know how much I—’

He was still in love, and of course whatever Phoebe said or did was good and admirable, and everything was twisted about to come to that conclusion. He thought her timid appeal to her old friend very touching and sweet; and finally, he made up his mind what to do to set her tender heart at rest, while he walked on to his abode, just now a scene of some considerable confusion and discomfort, as houses are apt to be while in the transition stage between one tenant and another.

As yet, however, it was only known to one or two that David Pierce was on the point of leaving

Cotover, and England also. He had agreed to join young Mr. Faverham, who was going to Australia, there to become landowners and farmers on their own account. But as he desired to leave the place where he had lived so long without causing, or at any rate, witnessing that ‘sensation’ which such an event was sure to cause in the stirless country village, he had kept the fact a secret, intending thus to avoid all formal farewells and curious inquiries from friends and acquaintances.

It was only on the eve of his departure, which chanced also to be the eve of last St. Valentine’s Day, that he went up to the mill. Phoebe, as fate would have it, chanced to be out, and he persuaded himself he was glad of it—glad to be spared the trial of consciously looking on her for the last time, at least for many years. He and his good friend the miller had a long talk, and parted at last, more convinced of one another’s true-hearted worth, perhaps, than ever they had been before. Unwonted moisture stood in old Staunton’s eyes as he wrung David’s hand, and wished him good speed.

‘I’d thought to ha’ had you hard by—a sort o’ extra son, like, to th’ end o’ my days,’ he said brokenly; ‘but it warn’t to be, and it’s no good, but bad for us to murmur. And if it’s best for yourself, David, I’m not the man to wish things otherways; and so good-bye t’ ye, and God bless ye!’

Phoebe never in her life will forget her coming home that night. The news was at once announced, which made her feel for a moment as if she had been shot—so sudden, so stunning and bewildering was the blow. As well as she could, she kept up appearances, however; and, in fact, her father, too frank and direct himself to suspect the possibility of his daughter being otherwise, was quite hurt at her apparent indifference to their old friend’s departure from amongst them.

‘I doubt ye’re a bit over gay and careless, Phoebe. Ye might have more heart, child. Sometimes it



seems as though what you *had* of it was asleep, or summat. And I did hope that the very man to wake it up, like, was him that's not coming near us no more, now. But don't cry, Phoebe; I'm not angry wi' ye, lass. We can't help our feelins, I'm aware; and I'm not blamin' ye for what's not your fault; let alone he never made up to ye like other young fellers. But he's the best of 'em all—the best of 'em all!

It was an era in Phoebe's life. Never before had she felt pangs like these; never had she found it so difficult to keep back all sign of the emotion struggling within her; never before had she longed so eagerly, so cravingly, to be alone. When she went to her room for the night, she locked her door, threw herself on her bed, and wept bitterly—bitterly; feeling more hopeless, more humble, more ashamed, than, a week or two ago, could have seemed possible to the lighthearted, admired, indulged little beauty.

Next morning she arose, pale, unrefreshed, and went down stairs, and out into the garden, that the fresh air might revive her into something more like herself. With a sad, impotent gaze, her eyes instinctively sought the pretty pastoral hill, on the further slope of which stood David's old home—his home no more. Already he had left it; he was to start at early dawn, he had told her father, and her father had told her. Phoebe had learned to feel, truly, as she stood under the lilac trees that seemed to shiver in the cold morning breeze, looking out on the landscape that was now so empty, so blank. She had altogether forgot what day it was. When she went into breakfast, the rosy-cheeked maid came to her, with mouth outstretched in a broad smile.

'There's four of 'em for you, Miss Phoebe,' she announced, as she handed them to her; 'and I've got one from that Tom, I guess. Like his impudence to send a fat cook to me, ha'n't it, miss?'

And Phoebe had to inspect, with what intelligence and sympathy she could muster, the highly-coloured

picture alluded to, with its ironical verse underneath.

'Never mind, Sally,' she consolingly said, as she left her, 'you know he's very fond of you all the time; it's only for mischief he tries to vex you.'

And then sighing, she thrust her own share of the day's harvest into her pocket, without even looking at it. All her old enjoyment in them, her pleased vanity, her petty triumph—were quite gone. There was no room for such feelings in her aching heart; poor, unhappy, sorely-punished Phoebe!

Not till quite late in the dreary, lagging day, did she draw her crumpled correspondence from her pocket, and proceed carelessly to inspect it. But, with what a leap of the heart—what a flash in the dim eyes—what a sudden eagerness of the fingers did she fasten on one, the most ordinary-looking, the only non-ornamented missive of the four.

It was his writing. Actually, he had sent to her, as usual! For, in fact, it had been one of the very few ostensibly lover-like attentions he had permitted himself, that every year he had been wont, on Valentine's Day, to send her verses, carefully transcribed, and which, though less brilliantly and florally illustrated than the rest of the tender communications received at the same time, were, as she had good taste enough to perceive, of a very different description, and a considerably higher order of poetry.

And now, had he actually sent her a last valentine? Surely, all could not be over, then? She opened it and read:—

'Good-bye, dear Phoebe; I write to you this once, just to say good-bye, and to make you sure that there is no need to be sorry about me, or to have one painful thought of your old friend. Don't ever suppose that I shall not be thankful and happy to know of your happiness. I am going into a new life in a new country, with good courage and hope. Never think of me otherwise, when you *do* think of me, which may be now and then, as an old friend, as I said, who will always

rejoice to know of your welfare.  
That is all. Good-bye, and God  
bless you, Phœbe!

'Your true friend,  
'DAVID PIERCE.'

This was the letter that honest David had, with great pains and difficulty, succeeded in producing, with the sole and simple idea of putting Phœbe's tender heart at rest concerning him. This, despatched in entire oblivion of the particular day on which it would arrive, was the closing one of that series of innocent love-letters which once a year he had gratified himself by sending under the shelter of the allowed license of the 14th of February. Alas, poor Phœbe! Too late she knew what she had lost; too late she understood how much she really cared for the man she had played with and had sent from her. She reaped the sorrow of which she herself had sown the seeds, when, in the careless pride of her youth, her good looks, and her untried prosperity, she had dared to trifle with a true heart, and pretend to cast aside a worthy love.

Does any one desire to hear that her punishment was life-long? Though this cannot be said, yet it is certain that during the two or three weeks immediately following that memorable Valentine's Day, Phœbe Staunton suffered with a bitterness and sharpness that made the time more fateful in its influences on her than all the previous years of her life had been. Sadder and wiser, indeed, she was; and the change from passive blank sorrow to keen anxiety that then came to her, was as the climax to her new experience of the deeper realities of feeling.

A letter came to the miller nearly a month after it was supposed David had left England. It was from a London doctor, and stated that Mr. Pierce was there. He had been unable to accompany Mr. Faversham, having caught a fever a day or two before the vessel sailed; that the fever had turned out more serious than was at first expected, and, though vanquished at last, it had

left him in a very weak and precarious condition; that he, the doctor, had only now succeeded in ascertaining the name and address of a friend of his patient's, whom he had asked to come and see him. Would Mr. Staunton come at once?

When Phœbe learned all this, and that her father was preparing to start immediately on the long journey, she went to him, and, with her pale face and earnest eyes sufficiently emphasizing the quiet words, she said:

'Oh, father! let me go too!'

The miller looked at her, fairly amazed at first. He was not very rapid in his perceptions usually, but a good deal must have made itself manifest to him, on this occasion, in a very brief space; for that one look seemed to teach him all he had to learn. He took her head between his two great hands and kissed her forehead, saying brokenly:

'Poor lass! my poor lass! How come it about so cross then? Don't fret; don't, love. Courage, my lamb! There, there—we'll go together—we'll go together!'

And they went. And two weeks after their arrival in London—two weeks for the most part spent by Phœbe in lonely anxiety while her father was with David—she sent him a little letter by the good miller's hands. What that little letter contained was never known but to the writer and recipient thereof; but the immediate result appeared to be, that Phœbe accompanied her father next time he went to see his friend, and that David's convalescence progressed towards recovery more rapidly thenceforward. It is rumoured that young Mr. Faversham, if he still waits David's arrival in Australia, will, like another illustrious emigrant, 'wait a long time.' But it is also currently reported that the squire is only too glad to get his much-valued agent back to his hill farm again, and that he regards the disappointment of his nephew, in respect of Mr. Pierce, with that temperate regret, not to say equanimity, with which, according to Rochefoucauld, we can always bear other people's misfortunes.



Illustration by Arthur Hughes.

# THE FAREWELL VALENTINE.

from the story.

rejoice to know of your welfare. That is all. Good-bye, and God bless you, Phoebe!

Your true friend,

DAVID PIERCE.

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Does any one doubt to hear that her punishment was life-long? Though this cannot be said, yet it is certain that during the two or three weeks immediately following that memorable Valentine's Day, Phoebe Stanton suffered with a bitterness and sharpness that made the time more fatal in its influences on her than all the previous years of her life had been. Sadder and wiser, indeed she was; and the chance, both possible and sorrow to have known that she came to her, was at the same time her last opportunity of deeper realisation of being.

A little more than a month nearly a month after she received David's last letter, it was from a London doctor, and stated that Mr. Pierce was there. He had been unable to accompany Mr. Faversham, having caught a fever a few days before the vessel sailed; that the fever had turned out more serious than was at first expected, and, though unquiescent at last, it had

left him in a very weak and precarious condition: that he, the doctor, had only now succeeded in ascertaining the name and address of a friend of his patient's, whom he had asked to come and see him. Would Mr. Stanton come at once?

When Phoebe learned all this, and that her father was preparing to start immediately on the long journey, she went to him, and, with her pale face and earnest eyes sufficiently emphasizing the quiet words, she said:

"Oh, father! let me go too!"

The miller looked at her, fairly amazed at first. He was not very rapid in his perceptions usually, but a good deal must have made itself manifest to him, on this occasion, in a very brief space; for that one look seemed to teach him all he had to learn. He took her hand between his two great hands and kissed her forehead and the forehead.

"And what is your wish? How can I consent to cross that? Don't fret; don't, love. Courage, my lambkin! There, there—we'll go together—we'll go together!"

And they went. And two weeks after their arrival in London—two weeks for the most part spent by Phoebe in lonely anxiety while her father was with David—she sent him a little letter by the good miller's hands. What that little letter contained was never known but to the writer and recipient thereof; but the immediate result appeared to be, that Phoebe accompanied her father next time he went to see his friend, and that David's convalescence progressed towards recovery more rapidly thenceforward. It is rumoured that young Mr. Faversham, if he still waits David's arrival in Australia, will, like another illustrious emigrant, 'wait a long time.' But it is also currently reported that the squire is only too glad to get his much-valued agent back to his hill farm again, and that he regards the disappointment of his nephew, in respect of Mr. Pierce, with that temporary regret, not to say squintiness, with which, according to Rochefoucauld, we can always bear other people's misfortunes.



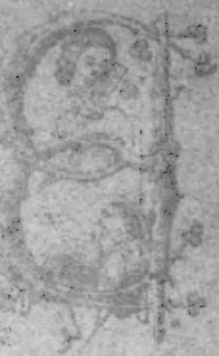
Drawn by Arthur Hughes.]

# THE FAREWELL VALENTINE.

[See the Story.]

THE FORTY-SIXTH

I have been thinking of you very much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you. I have been thinking of you very much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you.



When I was in the army, I was very much interested in the study of the history of the country. I have been thinking of you very much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you. I have been thinking of you very much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you.

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## SITTING ON A ROUT SEAT.



Y imperceptible stages I have now arrived at that age when a lady is considered to be verging on 'elderly,' and, excepting a sober quadrille now and then, have quite given up dancing. But as I have by no means given up looking on, and it is not so very long since I was as indefatigable a dancer as any young damsel in her first season, I may be allowed to give my experiences and opinions, without being suspected of having imbibed them in the days when young ladies wore their waists under their armpits and cultivated a perpetual stoop in imitation of the Venus de Medici. In the first place, I cannot help wondering whether all the young folks I see whirling round like enraptured teetotums, went through as much as I did in acquiring the art. At a tender age I was placed in the hands of one Mr.

Wright. Owing to the magnificence of this gentleman's deportment, and the shortness of his stature and legs, he gave the impression of a large chest, moving about without any apparent means of locomotion. This phenomenon, added to a jetty mass of hair and a huge moustache (at that time an uncommon appendage), invested him with a ferocity fatal to the peace of an infant. I was very tall of my age, and my parents and guardians, much to my distress, were perpetually calling attention to the fact. Never had the custom been so offensive as now, when, Mr. Wright having called me up before him, where I stood very conscious of my new shoes, my governess blandly said, 'You must excuse any little shyness at first, Mr. Wright. She has been growing very fast, and is, I fear, a little awkward. Is she not a great girl for seven?' Mr. Wright opened his mouth, and, instead of the ogre-like tones I tremblingly expected, kept it open in amazement, and said finally, in a breathless voice, 'Lor, what a monster!'

This relieved, but, at the same time, embarrassed me, which Mr. Wright perceiving, he hastened to say, kindly, 'Oh! as to awkward, some of the exercises for grace, and perhaps a little cachouca dance, or something-of-that, will soon set everything right. I think, my dear, we'll begin the positions now directly.'

We were great friends from that hour; but I am sorry to say my performances were not at all to his taste. He never got over the length of my strides, frequently implored me to let him 'see no angles,' and always regarded me nervously, after one day seeing me conduct a youth, aged nine, whom he had found refractory, through a quadrille in a style which, to say the least, was muscular. I did not stay long under him, and as we lived for some time in a lonely country place, I soon forgot my dancing.

When I was twelve years old, I was sent to a school kept by a lady whose hobby was gymnastics. She conducted me to a room apparently fitted up with every instrument of torture. This was the gymnasium, and here my sound health and long limbs served me in good stead. I soon rose to the top of the class, and could have stood my ground against most boys of my age.

'Coming out' time at length approached, and it was thought advisable that I should be brought to town and enrolled among the pupils of Monsieur Filbert, an eminent teacher of dancing. One morning, my governess and I arrived at one of his class rooms; I, perfectly comfortable, proud of my

muscles, and strong in the belief that I was as upright as any girl in England. I thought M. Filbert an ordinary-looking man enough, thin and grave, with a naturally ugly figure. He told me to stand up with the rest of the pupils, and took no more notice of me till the lesson was half over. I planted myself in a fine square position and began to dance with much energy and inward satisfaction. I soon found that M. Filbert was not at all slow to criticise; and as he passed me over in silence, I felt that he was satisfied. Hearing him say to a pale little girl near me, 'Dear child, is your back made of jelly? straighten it,' I immediately stiffened my own back with military precision and looked up complacently. M. Filbert's sharp eye saw this directly, and suddenly darting across the room, he said sharply, 'Do you want to knock me down, Miss Julia! your shoulders are in your ears, young lady. Bend your knees. Bend, bend. Lower still. Yield. Relax. Mon Dieu, are you made of iron?' It was all over. My confidence was wrecked and my self-possession vanished. A desolating sense that I was a rough country girl, who had been making a spectacle of herself, came over me; and, had it not been for shame, I should have cried. But I swallowed my mortification, and my wounded pride took a lucky direction, for I determined, cost what it might, that I would make M. Filbert retract before he had done with me. I forced my shoulders down until they seemed on the point of falling off. I nearly fell on my face in my anxiety to bend, and I twisted my unfortunate arms in every possible direction. Seeing I was really trying, the tyrant left me; still, however, repeating that I was made of iron. The next victims he visited were two little girls, who were also there for the first time. They had been wriggling about in a very mysterious manner, and now M. Filbert asked if they had ever learned before. 'Yes,' the elder said, 'Mr. Down, at Lincoln, taught us for a little while.'

'And did Brown at Lincoln teach

you to do all that?' asked the tormentor.

'Ye-e-es,' said the little girl, uneasily blushing.

'Then don't do it again, dear children; but do try to keep your chins out of your necks, and don't walk on your insteps.' With this advice he turned away and cried out to a child who was 'poking'—

'Miss Isabel, I'll cut that chin off in a minute.' No one escaped. Presently we were told we might sit down a little while, and we ran joyfully to the benches, little knowing this was a trap set to betray our awkwardness. Our backs were no sooner turned than he looked after us like a lynx, and called us all back ignominiously, saying: 'Now go to your seats like ladies instead of racing like boys (looking at me), or waddling like ducks.' This last was for the Lincoln young ladies, who were round and short. We spent three or four minutes very uneasily, while he inspected us and made uncomplimentary remarks on the way we took our seats. Next he ordered us to stand up for a quadrille, and began to arrange us in pairs. Here his active spirit came in with great effect. Sisters were wrenched asunder and sent into different sets, and one little girl, who was very pretty and coquettish, having declined the advances of the only little boy there, who was timid and devoted to her, M. Filbert declared she should be his own partner, which was with reason the most dreaded of all positions. Very soon my masterly style of action drew M. Filbert's attention to me again.

My arms were the offending members in the present instance. It seemed they would *not* bend. M. Filbert, however, was determined they should, and he led me forth to the very middle of the room. After looking at me until I felt exquisitely uneasy, he elaborately explained the carriage it was proper for a lady habitually to maintain, and, in a few moments, my own efforts and some arrangement on his part, bent me into a position not much removed from that of a Chinese mandarin, in-

cluding the bobbing to and fro. Forbidding me to stir, M. Filbert called the attention of the whole room to the improvement he had worked, and practically illustrated my usual appearance, which certainly did appear somewhat devoid of grace. He then led me back to my place, but I was not allowed to relax, and I passed the rest of the time moving about like a stately Cochin China fowl.

There was in the class an unlucky boy of fourteen, whose appearance was quite an irregularity, and who never came again. He has probably not forgotten his experiences.

The narrowness of his chest and the width of his back gave great offence, and at the first opportunity M. Filbert attacked him on the subject.

'Come here, my boy,' said he; 'I want to see whether you've got a chest. Why you have, I declare. I must see that, please; throw it out; that's the way; more, more still' (giving him a sound blow in the back).

'Oh-h-h, I can't!' gasped the victim.

'Oh! yes, you can. But what is this? Why, I do believe it is the waistcoat. Do you think it is the waistcoat?' he asked in a confidential tone.

Then turning to the room, with a concerned expression:—

'He's got such a waistcoat, poor fellow, and such a back, so long; oh! dear, dear, what a length it is!'

The poor boy, overcome with confusion, put his hand on his back deprecatingly, whereat M. Filbert said with sympathy:—

'Yes, feel it. Isn't it long?'

There was no going to sleep under M. Filbert. He never rested himself, and he did not allow any one else to do so. Very rarely he would praise. If a girl did well, he seldom did more than leave her alone; but a fault was never passed over. And yet, with all this severity, he had the tact to make us feel he was in the right, and there was no being angry with him. He was specially merciless to the eldest girls, and so I was often rebuked; but still I felt that he appreciated

any effort I made to please him, and he inspired us all with a determination never to give in. In due course I won my long-desired triumph. One day, quite suddenly, he announced that I was one of his best pupils, and was to be promoted to a small class specially advanced. There the lessons were pure enjoyment, and I grieved much when I was taken from his care.

At length the all-important 'first ball' came off and gave me much to reflect upon. The difference between dancing in an orderly manner, with a number of well-schooled young ladies, under the eye of M. Filbert, who would have stopped us had a finger been out of position, and dancing in a crowded room with a succession of strange youths, was indeed striking.

At first I was dismayed at their utter independence of Filbertian rules, but soon grew amused at the curious varieties they presented. My first partner was peculiarly trying. An athletic partner. He held me with a grasp of iron, plunged headlong into the dance, used me as a missile of wrath with which he cleared away all obstacles, and by falling down, involved me and some others in a disgraced heap. Never shall I forget my sensations on rising. I scarcely heard the breathless apologies of this fatal man, and hurrying to a seat in a deserted corner, I bowed a dismissal to him, and felt I could never again appear in the dance.

Scarcely had he left me when the hostess came in with a particularly bright and dapper-looking stranger, whom she presented, and with whom I presently found myself dancing. What a contrast! This was perfect delight, and, by some marvellous contrivance, although the ball was crowded, we never seemed to come near any one, and always had plenty of room. With the zeal of a young dancer, I did not often want to rest, yet, whenever we did stop, I always found myself securely sheltered behind a very broad pair of shoulders. That was my first experience of true dancing; a never-to-be-forgotten sensation.

My next partner was of a different

order. He was pale, and bald, with spectacles, and very red bony wrists, and, after a few turns, he asked me if I had seen that week's '— Review,' which contained an able article on the late outbreak of cholera, giving the statistics for the last ten years; and whether I was disposed or not to accept the author's views. This was severe matter for a ball-room, and my excited spirits were quite unable to cope with it. From this, he passed to the last census returns, and we soon became so scientific, and danced so dreadfully out of time, that I was forced to plead fatigue. He was succeeded by a very timid young man, who held me at arm's length, lost me several times, and who had nothing further to say, after he had asked me if I walked much in the Park or whether I preferred driving. Later, I danced with a nautical gentleman, who was very good-natured and amusing, told me some wonderful tales, which I implicitly believed, and whose company I thoroughly enjoyed, in spite of feeling so much as if on board ship while dancing with him. His movements were charmingly light and smooth; but it was surprising how often we were nearly off our balance and recovered again, what unlooked-for lurches occurred, and how frequently one of his legs intruded into other couples! I liked him better than my next partner, who was an 'elderly young man,' about forty years of age, thoroughly determined to be no more than twenty-five. He presented a weedy appearance and a general stiffness of joint, had a disappointing way of continually twisting round on the same ground, and whenever we were knocked against by passing couples seemed dreadfully jarred. I thought him very silent, and after one turn round the room, he looked so extremely pale that I proposed a rest, and on his

suggesting an ice, in a faint voice, eagerly assented in the hope of finding him a seat. What a mysterious fact it is, making us suspect some malice on the part of hosts and hostesses, that the tallest men in the room invariably got paired with the shortest women, and *vice versa*! It is grievous to see a poor fellow over six feet, either carrying round a little creature of four feet nothing, or bending his spine to a heart-breaking degree! What reverses that valorous little man is doomed to suffer who *will* lead forth a voluminous lady! How he appears to be hiding behind her skirts, and, after vainly endeavouring to pioneer her through the dance, is fain to come out of it, battered and humiliated!

I often figured personally in such adventures, for my entrance seemed a signal for all the little men in the room to start up. When fairly launched in a dance with one of these pigmies I was oppressed with a sense of responsibility, and found myself wondering whether or no I should deliver him up at the end, safe in limb.

These are recollections of my own dancing days; but as I sit on a rout seat next to the corner, I notice with sorrow that its dear old familiar snorts do not seem to inspire the present generation, or rather the male portion of it, with the old ardour.

How is it that in these days of gymnastics and volunteer corps, there are so many inert young gentlemen, while there are so many young damsels longing for action?

As a most interested and loving looker-on, I petition them not to give up the old-fashioned love of dancing, and humbly submit to them, that it may possibly be as worthy a grace as many they are at more pains to cultivate.



